

LEADERS OF THE WORLD

Biographical Series

General Editor: ROBERT MAXWELL, M. C.

Erich Honecker

From My Life

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From My Life



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Contents

Publisher's Preface	IX
I From a working-class family	1
II As a child with Young Spartacus	13
III Joining the party of Thälmann	25
IV Encounter with the country of Lenin	37
V The fight for a united front	49
VI Illegal activity in the Ruhr	63
VII Resistance in the Saarland and Berlin	81
VIII The years in prison	95
IX Days and hours of liberation	115
X Symbol of the rising sun	127
XI Unity of the working class—Basic rights for the young generation	141
XII Peace Flight to the East	153
XIII The birth of our state	163
XIV Youth for socialism and peace	181
XV Time for study	195
XVI The thirteenth of August 1961	203

XVII	Trust in the strength of the people	215
XVIII	Close connections with sport	225
XIX	New horizons for youth	237
XX	At the head of the party	249
XXI	A highly industrialised country	261
XXII	Modern management in socialist industry	275
XXIII	Results of agricultural policy	283
XXIV	Wanted: inventors and innovators	295
XXV	The millionth new home	311
XXVI	A birthrate again on the rise	327
XXVII	With youth for a communist future	339
XXVIII	Socialist cultural policy	349
XXIX	Our democracy	361
XXX	Encounters in the Crimea	373
XXXI	Helsinki—signing the final document	389
XXXII	Two German states	401
XXXIII	Between Manila and Havana	413
XXXIV	A dialogue on current political issues	427

Plates	443
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Appendices

Address delivered at a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the GDR	479
Tables	495
Index of names	507
Index of abbreviations	513

NOTE FOR READERS OF THE ENGLISH EDITION

Index of abbreviations

In order to assist readers who may be already familiar with events described in this book, many organisations and groups are referred to in their normal German abbreviated form.

The index at the end of the book sets out all these abbreviations, together with the full German designation and their translated equivalents.

Publisher's Preface

As the publisher of the series "Leaders of the World" I have the honour of presenting to the public the third volume which deals with the life and work of Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic. As represented by Erich Honecker, the German Democratic Republic, together with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community, is a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and one of the states of the Warsaw Treaty. In international politics and in the struggle for peace and disarmament it plays an increasingly important part. The 30th anniversary of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in October 1979 is a fitting occasion for the publication of this book.

Robert Maxwell



With mother, brother and sisters ca. 1915-16
from l. to r.: Willi, Erich, Käthe, Karoline and Frieda Honecker.,

I

From a working-class family

Should one welcome or bewail the fact that the birth of ■ human being is hidden from his or her awareness and memory? It is probably better so. Despite all progress in medical science mothers still bring their children into this world in pain. In addition there are psychological burdens, especially if joy over the newborn is clouded by the worry that it won't be possible to give him or her the proper conditions for a start in life. If times are bad. If the house is cold and too small. If there is ■ shortage of food. If the parents' income, despite all their effort and thrift, is insufficient. And if the father's job is insecure.

What could have been the feelings of my mother on that Sunday, 25 August 1912, when she brought me into this world at 26 Karlstrasse (now 26 Max-Braun-Strasse) at Neunkirchen in our attic flat? And my father, miner Wilhelm Honecker (born 8 March 1881 at Wiebelskirchen), then 31 years old, what did he think? My mother was 29. She was born Karoline Weidenhof on 2 June 1883 at Neunkirchen. My parents had married on 9 December 1905. They were happily married and loved children. They always gave all they had for their children and grandchildren.

I am sure there was no lack of well-wishing from relatives and friends when the "Sunday child" was born. But that Sunday was certainly not

without worry for Karoline Honecker and her husband. From now on there were four children to look after: Katharina, called Käthe, born 19 February 1906, Wilhelm, called Willi, born 22 September 1907, Frieda, born 11 May 1909—and the “Sunday child”. Later on two more would come: Gertrud, born ■ March 1917, and Karl-Robert, born 12 February 1923. A family with six children was not a rarity then. To bring them up, however, was no easy task for my mother. I remember her as a brave proletarian housewife.

Neunkirchen, according to the 1914 edition of *Brockhaus' Kleines Konversations-Lexikon* was a market town in the Prussian governmental district of Trier (Trèves), located on the Blies river, 34,539 inhabitants in 1910, with ■ local magistrate's court, two mining inspectorates, a high school, iron works (Gebrüder Stumm), coal mines and a cement factory: a sooty backwater without enough sunshine and oxygen. Tuberculosis was rampant in the damp dwellings, that proletarians' disease to which my elder sister Käthe fell victim on 29 August 1925 at the age of 19. Barely half a year before I was born my grandfather Andreas Honecker had died ■ the nearby village of Wiebelskirchen (8,719 inhabitants in 1910). A miner throughout his life, he had built a little house for himself in 1869. We inherited and moved into this tiny and no longer new house at 64 Wilhelmstrasse (now 88 Kuchenbergstrasse) on 1 December 1913. It had four rooms on the first floor and two attic rooms. A two-room apartment on the ground floor was let. There was also a garden. My parents were happy to find themselves for their 8th wedding anniversary in their own home.

No doubt the change of place and atmosphere was something of a burden on the Honeckers but it also made a few things easier. Miners in the Saarland were at the time subject to particular exploitation. In 1912, the Saar miner received a maximum of 4.83 Reichsmark for a shift of up to 10 hours on face work in one of the government-owned mines (i.e. owned by the Prussian state). Shift pay in the Ruhr coal mines was then 6.02 Reichsmark. A kilogram of butter cost 4.80 Reichsmark: 10 hours of bone-grinding labour at the coal face for one kilogram of butter!

Wages in the Saarland were distinctly below subsistence level. The mine owners reckoned that at least one third of the Saar miners were only semi-proletarians who, in addition to their miners' work and pay, worked a piece of land with their families, owned a cow, a pig or at least a goat in order to maintain their labour power which they had sold to the industrial barons. In such circumstances, whoever tried to afford to maintain even ■ very little house had to work at least one and a half shifts a day and send his wife

and children out to work as well, even though there were neither canteens where one could eat cheaply, nor kindergartens, nor day nurseries.

The years before 1914 have often been called "the golden age". In reality they were years of increasing capitalist exploitation and political oppression. In Prussia, until 1918, ■ three-tier voting system based on income existed: workers had no say in things. Cost of living rose by 30 per cent between 1900 and 1912, while real wages in 1912 equalled only 97 per cent of 1900 wages. During the same period the "upper ten thousand" pocketed incredibly high profits. In Prussia alone the income of the few top earners climbed from 2.35 billion Reichsmark in 1900 to 3.81 billion Reichsmark in 1912.

But "the golden age" before 1914 was not only characterized by increasing exploitation. It also bore the signs of increasing danger of war. German imperialism, having come late to the game of carving up the world and therefore having less than its rivals, engaged in the most reckless adventures for the sake of economic, political and military expansion. Class-conscious proletarians experienced those years as a hard daily struggle for their economic, social and political rights, years of anything but easy resistance to militarism and chauvinist incitement, years of complicated combat against the manifold reactionary machinations which were related to the passing of capitalism into its imperialist phase. At Neunkirchen, miners and steel workers had the opportunity to experience a particularly striking embodiment of German imperialism from close quarters: industry magnate Karl Ferdinand Freiherr von Stumm-Halberg, owner of the Stumm group of companies, whose original factory stood not far from the house where I was born.

In our family, Karl Stumm, ennobled in 1888, was ironically called "King Stumm" or "King of Saar-abia", a pun on the despotism with which this mightiest of Saarland industrial barons and personal friend of Kaiser Wilhelm II used to rule his industrial empire. Karl Stumm, an early successful war profiteer, had succeeded in bagging several large mining concerns after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and had combined them with his inherited Saarland possessions into ■ considerable monopolistic enterprise. During the '90s he had made a name for himself as a rabid advocate of ■ new anti-socialist law for the suppression of social democracy. The era was called the "Stumm era" after him, the era of a retrogression in social politics, retrogression even beyond the humble achievements of the Bismarck era.

In his own factories Stumm played himself up in a patronising manner but forbade any union activity and excluded socialists from employment. It is therefore not surprising that the class struggle against the Stumm dynasty had developed into a family tradition of the Weidenhofs—my mother's father was a rolling-mill supervisor in the Neunkirchen iron works and a revolutionary social democrat—and of the Honeckers as well. With this "hereditary enmity" against "King Stumm" our family found itself in good, even excellent, company. Stumm's reactionary regime was hated so much amongst the workers who suffered under it that many of them were even more strongly resolved to vote Social Democrat. In the national elections in 1912, the year I was born, the Social Democrat candidate obtained a majority. From then on the constituency was known as the "red village".

But it was not only in the Saarland that "King Stumm" met with rejection—his regime was condemned by virtually all leading representatives of the revolutionary German workers' movement: by Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx's best friend and co-founder of scientific communism, by Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin.

As early as 19 February 1892, Friedrich Engels had pointed out in a letter to Bebel two tendencies emanating from the German bourgeoisie which were determined by different attitudes to the monarchical and Junker caste. At this time, Engels wrote from London, the second one seems to be surfacing, in which case, of course, industrial barons of the Stumm variety and the shareholders of industrial concerns would mostly side with the diehard reactionaries. Engels followed Bebel's speeches against Stumm in the Reichstag with great relish.

Grandfather Georg Weidenhof, who never lost his Saarland humour, had been a fervent admirer of the satirical journal *Der wahre Jakob* ("The Real McCoy") which always gave a prominent place to "King Stumm". The greed of this *nouveau riche*, ennobled son of an ironmonger, his never-ending tirades full of overflowing moral fervour, his particular liking for accusing Social Democrats of committing perjury, of favouring "free love" and of tearing down the "hallowed ties of the family", his attempts—which came to look ludicrous—to "stem the red flood": all this taken together turned the Neunkirchen industrial magnate and castle owner into a favourite target for satirists and caricaturists.

When on 8 March 1901, my father's 20th birthday, the baron died at Schloss Halberg near Saarbrücken, *Der wahre Jakob* dedicated to him a

farewell poem and a mournful obituary which confessed: "We have lost such a good contributor." There was one verse from "King Forge" which the Saar miners would long have good reason to remember:

"How many were the days
When King Forge in his ire
Lashed at us in a blaze
Of sparks of raging fire.
But hard blows make hard steel
That does not break or bend
And if the timbers shook
We held out to the end."

At that time it was already an open secret that "King Stumm" and his sons were furnishing armour plating and turrets for Kaiser Wilhelm's mad naval armaments programme and that they, like the armaments king Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, were raking in millions in extra profits. It was equally clear that the naval armaments programme carried out under the imperial edict "Our future rests upon the water" would inevitably be considered a provocation in England.

On 18 April 1913 Karl Liebknecht gave his famous speech in the Berlin parliament on the "International of arms manufacturers". He also came to speak on the Stumm dynasty and proved their dangerous hypocrisy. On the one hand they excelled in jingoism and shamelessly used the newspaper *Post* which they controlled to agitate day after day against "the French arch-enemy". On the other hand, there was French capital in the Stumm concern, and the weapons developed at Stumm's were also sold to "the arch-enemy". "We have never doubted," Liebknecht declared, "that capitalism has no homeland, and the more this is the case, the more patriotic its posturing."

We have since learned how right Karl Liebknecht was when he talked about the "absolute unscrupulousness of capitalism's urge for profits". During the years of the "golden age", the International of arms manufacturers in league with reactionary military circles had unscrupulously employed every means to bring about a war that would be profitable to them, a war against which Engels had warned as early as October 1891, a war in which "15 to 20 million armed men would slaughter each other" and all of Europe would be devastated as it had never been before.

The name of the war profiteer Stumm reappeared, in April 1917, in the fourth volume of the "Spartacus Letters". This outlawed publication of the

revolutionary German Left carried on its polemics against the right-wing union bosses who had spoken out in favour of the war in August 1914 and who even in the third winter of the war were still demanding of the exhausted workers in the armaments industry increased efficiency. "And truly," the Spartacus Letter said, "the late Baron von Stumm, the proverbial despot of the workers in Saar-abia, did not even have remotely as cold ■ disregard for the masses ■■ do the petty upstarts at the top of the Free Trade Unions."

This pointed formulation gives an impression of the indignation with which class-conscious workers then reacted to the treason committed by right-wing leaders of the Social Democrats and the trade unions. Thus the treason of August 1914 was also the main reason why many miners at Wiebelskirchen and elsewhere turned away from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Many of the workers who had been disappointed by the Social Democrats, amongst them my father, later on became members of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) which was founded in the winter of 1918/19. From then on Wiebelskirchen would have an unshakeable majority of communist votes.

The First World War started a good three weeks before my second birthday. I was still too young to be aware of the events which led up to the outbreak of the war, even though its consequences overshadowed my childhood and strongly influenced the rest of my life. My earliest memories are concerned with the war: Father "at the front", mother queuing up at the baker's, bread rations, no milk, potatoes scarce, shortage of coal, worn-out clothes and shoes from my elders, hunger all the time.

In the middle of the war the photograph at the beginning of this chapter was taken which shows my mother, my elder brother, my two elder sisters and myself. "Family without a father" could be a caption for this picture which recalls memories of my mother's self-sacrifices for her children. At that time there was virtually no financial compensation for the loss of earning of a called-up worker. Wives had to fend for themselves to look after their children. Just how often did mother go hungry to keep her children fed: She was an artist at the sewing machine and at the cooking stove. She made new clothes from old ones and an appetising soup from the most meagre ingredients. Diligence, orderliness and thrift were her main virtues.

Often ■■ children went for the syrup in the larder or the potato soup that was meant for the next day's meal. We got no boxes on the ears, only

exhortations. Corporal punishment was taboo in our family. Father was an upright man. And mother knew how to bring us up as decent human beings without physical punishment. Once, however, it must have been soon after the war, my father gave me a thrashing. I think it was because it was such an exception that I haven't forgotten it. I had taken ■ few pfennigs from the cup in which my mother kept savings. I wanted to buy marbles to play with the other children. "Once doesn't count," we used to say.

When in April 1918, at Easter, I was enrolled in the first grade of the elementary school at Wilhelmstrasse (now Kuchenbergstrasse) the world war was in its fourth year. The terrible war winter of 1917/18 was behind us. The imperialist war with all its squalor had become the most disruptive experience of my childhood. And a further event rooted itself in my consciousness: the news of the Red October in Russia and the hope which emanated from it. Even before my first school year ended, the November revolution of 1918/19 in Germany followed.

Soon after the beginning of the war my father had had to leave us. He was a sailor with the Imperial Navy at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven and, for a while, a marine in Flanders. He sent picture postcards from Ostend and other Belgian cities to my mother. The soldiers used to sing:

"Flanders is a lovely little land
tralali, tralala
Where there are lovely girls at every hand
tralali, tralala."

But war was not a tralali, tralala. It also came to quite a different end from the one "His Majesty the Kaiser" and his jingoist supporters had imagined. "His Majesty" went into exile in Holland, while my father returned home unscathed from the battlefield. He took part in the revolution in Kiel.

When my father, by now a member of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), returned to Wiebelskirchen, he found a workers' and soldiers' council already installed. During the revolutionary days at the beginning of November 1918 the flag with the imperial eagle had been hauled down and the red flag hoisted. It was still flying there at the end of November 1918 when French occupation troops moved in. That marked the end of the revolution in the Saarland.

But the red flag remained unforgotten by the Honeckers. We always held

fast to it. None of us became unfaithful even though the youngest of us, my brother Robert, born in 1923, became during Hitler's "Thousand-Year Reich" a member of the Hitler Youth, virtually by decree. It was just because his father was by then well-known as a communist spokesman of the miners and also ■ ■ local councillor at Wiebelskirchen that the Nazis, who had moved into the Saarland in 1935, wanted to make a "little Führer" out of Robert Honecker. The effort ended in tragedy: My brother was taken prisoner by the British in Greek waters during the Second World War, sent to Egypt, kept in an open-air camp in the desert exposed to extremes of heat during the day and cold at night and contracted bilharzia, a disease much dreaded in Egypt and caused by the presence of a parasitic worm in the blood; he died of it a few weeks after his return to Wiebelskirchen on 30 October 1947.

My older brother Willi, who was and remained a communist, was called up, in spite of a chronic stomach ailment, almost at the end of the Second World War to serve as a driver in Hitler's army and died on 21 April 1944 in Hungary. His grave has never been found. My sister Käthe died on 29 August 1925, as I have said, of tuberculosis. My mother lived till 22 April 1963, my father till 4 December 1969. After a life of toil and struggle they ended their days in the Saarland—as communists.

Since my sister Frieda died on 29 November 1974, my other sister, Gertrud, who still lives in the parental home, and I are the only surviving Honeckers of the original family.

When I think back nowadays, remembering my parental home at Wiebelskirchen, I must say it was a hard but also a happy childhood. We were lucky in that the November revolution brought our father back home. He was determined to teach his children the right lessons which he had learned from years of senseless slaughter. There was no radio or television in those days. The very limited spare time my parents had was devoted to political work and talking with their children. I remember very well many an explanation my father offered in answer to my questions, patiently and understandingly. He taught me family and class solidarity. We Honeckers withstood the poison of nationalism. We were proletarian internationalists. We looked at things from the point of view of the working class.

At that time the standard charge against revolutionary workers was that they were inspired by personal greed and resentment. This is nonsense. We were against the capitalist system of exploitation but not against the "better off" as such. There were some amongst them who deserved and had our

respect: for instance the Catholic prelate Johann Schütz (we were Protestants and left church at the age of 14), the nuns from St John's convent opposite my parents' house who had tenderly nursed my sister Käthe during her illness and often fed my sisters and myself; or Peter Röser, director of the Protestant school in Hochstrasse (now Prälat-Schütz-Strasse) which I attended from the 3rd to the 8th grade. He remembered me years later, while I was imprisoned at Brandenburg-Görden where he sent me his greetings.

From the end of 1918 colleagues and comrades of my father met regularly at our house in Wiebelskirchen. He tolerated my coming into the room—even though he had asked me not to disturb—when they were discussing political issues, principally the situation in the mining industry, the steel works and the Deschen pit where my father worked for decades as a shop steward and security man until his dismissal in 1935.

On many an evening the gathering listened to my father reading from the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Of course, at the time, I understood virtually nothing. Yet the atmosphere of these gatherings, the determined struggle for clarity, the mutual trust amongst those assembled, their desire for political change and also the names of the great revolutionaries whose words my father read out fascinated me and left an unforgettable impression.

During those years I heard for the first time the name Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. "We must do it like Lenin," they would say during those gatherings. To do it like Lenin is what German communists have always striven to do, both then and since. Why this endeavour remained unsuccessful for decades is set forth in a book published in Berlin in 1979 under the title *Ernst Thälmann. Eine Biographie*. After the Second World War the tide turned in the territory of the German Democratic Republic, which was founded in 1949, and with the development of which the best parts of my life are closely connected, as I shall show later on.

Then, during the days of the November revolution and the years of the revolutionary post-war crisis, my father explained to me in his simple way why the rich are rich and the poor poor, what causes wars, who profits and who suffers from them. This was enlightening for me. I developed a clearer impression of the world. I decided to devote my life to a world of peace and socialism. To this life's task I have adhered to this day.

I do not remember a single moment in my life in which I have doubted our cause—neither in my childhood nor in my youth, the years of political work in the Young Communist League of Germany (KJVD) and my joining

the Communist Party of Germany, not in the antifascist resistance from 1933 to 1935, not in Nazi imprisonment from 1937 to 1945, not at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin's Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse in December 1935, nor before the "People's Court" in June 1937, not in the barracks of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler at the end of 1935, nor in the face of the executioner who was my permanent companion during one and a half years of interrogation.



Communist children's group.
Wiebelskirchen ca. 1922: showing Erich (x), Gertrud (xx) and Frieda Honecker (xxx).

II

As a child with Young Spartacus

In summer 1977, on my 65th birthday, radio and TV stations in the Federal Republic of Germany felt called upon to interview some of my previous classmates about their memories of me. The reporters who hardly ever have anything favourable to say about the GDR got only favourable information. I had been a “nice fellow” and “at school I had been good at maths”. The people interviewed also remembered that “Erich took an active interest in politics at an early age”. And this is certainly correct. Shortly before my 10th birthday in 1922 I became a member of the communist children’s group at Wiebelskirchen. I had just entered the fifth grade of elementary school. Belonging to a communist children’s group was not looked at kindly at school. But I liked it. It gave me a lot.

The Wiebelskirchen communist children’s group which soon included about 50 boys and girls of school age had a diversified and interesting programme. We made excursions together—singing songs, of course—enjoyed the beauty of nature and got to know our Saarland more closely. We enjoyed sports, engaged in amateur dramatics—“Spartacus the Slave Liberator” for instance—practised songs for public gatherings and party demonstrations and met for entertaining and educational afternoons which sometimes were held in the attic of my parents’ house.

Music played from a tape was unheard of then. So we ourselves had to sing, for example, that youth song much beloved to this day:

“When we’re marching side by side
and sing the good old songs
until the woods around
with our hopes resound
We are marching with the times.
We are marching with the times!”

For us proletarian children it was natural to walk “side by side”. Elitist individualism, such as the sons of the upper classes often display, was alien to us. Within the communist children’s group we experienced the power of community, the power which accrues to the working class from being organised. And this community anticipated the better future, the hope of a new era for which we as children were already fighting.

Yes, we distributed party leaflets and sold party newspapers, mainly the *Arbeiterzeitung* (Workers’ Journal) published since 2 January 1922 as the voice of the Saarland KPD; we collected solidarity contributions for striking workers and for Soviet Russia and took part in political rallies. In demonstrations, on May Day for instance, we often marched in the front row when it was a matter of breaking police cordons. So even in our early years we found ourselves true fellow fighters in the great proletarian movement; “Young Spartacists” we called ourselves from 1924 on, even after the communist children’s groups had officially been incorporated in the Young Spartacus League (JSB), the children’s organisation of the KPD.

In retrospect I can say that the Wiebelskirchen communist children’s group applied actively and imaginatively the “Programme for the creation of communist children’s groups” which had been adopted at the national congress of the KJVD in December 1920 in Berlin, and published in January 1921 in *Die Junge Garde* (The Young Guard). This programme denounced the “spiritual and physical mutilation” to which capitalist society exposed millions of working-class children. “These facts,” it was pointed out, “force the proletariat to take a more energetic interest in looking after and educating youth.” The main objectives of communist children’s groups were defined as “the gathering of proletarian children, the awakening of class consciousness, education towards proletarian solidarity and struggle against the exploiters, publication of statistical material about child squalor, and agitation for the improvement of material conditions for children”.

It is true that other parties were also trying in one way or another to organise children and win them over. But no other party in Germany devoted so much attention to children's and youth work as the communist movement. This no doubt resulted primarily from the revolutionary purpose of the communists. They were fighting for a better future for the nation which should give the working class and especially their children a better life. Children represented the future on which the revolutionaries had fixed their eyes.

During the years of bitter class struggle the acrimonious phrase was coined that communists were "corpses on reprieve". "No matter whether we live or not," Karl Liebknecht had written prophetically in the issue of *Die rote Fahne* for 15 January 1919, the day he was murdered, "when our goal is achieved, our programme will live; it will dominate the world of a redeemed mankind. Forward in spite of everything!" The proletariat, continually renewing itself, would continue the battle unto victory. For this no sacrifice was too great and no deprivation too harsh. Certainty about the future is an essential element of world communism and part of it is love for children.

In addition it profited the Party that it was, in more than one sense, young. Contrary to the ossified and opportunist line of appeasement adopted by the right-wing leaders of the "majority socialists" and the "Independent Social Democrats", the KPD had chosen a revolutionary programme filled with the ever-youthful spirit of world improvement. And amongst the forces which the KPD, founded in 1918/19, united, it was quite natural that the youthful element should predominate, matured in the horrors of the war and the turbulent revolutionary events of the postwar years. Many came from the revolutionary youth movement and contributed its traditions to the young communist party.

The revolutionary tradition—which, having started with the Communist League founded in 1847, was taken up by the revolutionary German Social Democrats and passed on to the KPD—had never really been broken in the proletarian youth movement. Right in the middle of the First World War, during the famous illegal Easter conference of the opposition German socialist youth movement in April 1916 in Jena, the delegates voted, after a speech by Karl Liebknecht, decisively against the *Burgfrieden* (consensus) policy of the right-wing leaders of the German Social Democrats and against their treacherous "youth policy".

At Easter 1916 a nucleus of the opposition working-class youth had been

formed from which developed, even before the German November revolution, the Free Socialist Youth of Germany (FSJ). In October 1918 at its first national conference it had about 4,000 members. In February 1919 at the second national conference 51 delegates from 73 local branches represented 12,000 members. In October 1919 at the third national conference the FSJ counted about 35,000 young comrades. A year later in September 1920 this young guard of the proletariat had become so strong as to justify the name Communist Youth of Germany (KJVD). From 1925 it was to be called Young Communist League of Germany, and later on, particularly during the antifascist resistance against Hitler's dictatorship, it did honour to its name.

Without any major interruption, the workers' youth movement in Germany followed and represented the ideas of proletarian internationalism as propounded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It kept faithfully to the resolutions of the international conferences of socialist youth organisations in Stuttgart 1907, Copenhagen 1910 and Berne 1915. These resolutions meant commitment to the battle against the imperialist war and against its true cause, the capitalist system of society.

When in November 1919 at an underground congress in Berlin the Communist Youth International (CYI) was born, which conceived itself as part of the Comintern founded in March 1919, its two main pillars were the Young Communist League of Soviet Russia and the proletarian youth movement of Germany. From the ranks of the latter Leo Flieg and Willi Münzenberg were voted into the five-member Executive Committee.

Münzenberg's active part in the founding of the CYI, in the building-up of International Workers' Aid (IAH) and in the development of the famous *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* (AIZ), is as well known as his tragic end in French exile in 1940. Much too little known is Münzenberg's exemplary work for the children of the proletariat. He did a great lot for the children of the proletariat. He did a great lot for their intellectual and material welfare.

Soon a department was founded within the CYI to deal with the foundation of international children's groups worldwide. From January 1921 onwards the Executive Committee of the CYI published a newspaper *The Young Comrade—International Newspaper for Workers' Children*, the German edition of which we at the Wiebelskirchen children's group read avidly. The IAH can claim credit in many countries for their youth work: their solidarity fund raising for children of striking workers, food and

recreational travel programmes for children, holiday camps and nurseries at home and abroad.

Anyone who leafs through the volumes of the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* from the '20s and the early '30s will be surprised at the diversity and scope of the work then being done for the welfare of children. In view of the unhealthy living conditions of proletarian children the frequent sports events, such as the children's and youth spartakiads, were of great value to the young generation. This multifaceted programme of aid for children created by the Communists set standards for a child-loving society long before the UN declaration of 1959 on the rights of children. And I consider it a gratifying consequence of such traditions that nowadays the GDR is internationally known as a child-loving country.

Since 1900 bourgeois humanists had invoked the 20th century as the "century of the child". But only the power of the workers and peasants in Soviet Russia brought about a real change in this respect as in so many others. I still remember reports I heard about a child from the land of Red October where Soviet power had handed over the palatial buildings of the Tsar's former summer residence, Tsarskoye Selo, to the children. The residence was renamed Detskoye Selo: the children's village. We workers' children in the Saarland could at that time only dream of such spectacular state welfare programmes for the young.

In 1922, when I joined the Wiebelskirchen communist children's group, a new edition of a book entitled *Das proletarische Kind* (The proletarian child) was published. Its author was Otto Rühle who had voted with Karl Liebknecht against the issue of war credits and who was a founder member of the KPD which he regrettably left later on. Based on official statistics Rühle's work showed what capitalism gave to the proletarian child: high child mortality, housing shortage, scrofula, tuberculosis, undernourishment, underweight, impaired physical development, child labour, caning, wretched school conditions and a propitious climate for vice and crime.

At that time the state spent six times as much on a grammar school boy, son of a rich father, as it did on an elementary school boy. The pay of elementary school teachers was correspondingly low and so was the state of repair of elementary schools and their budgets for teaching aids. There were no free school books, no school meals even though the workers' children needed these things badly.

Anyone interested in how we lived through the economic difficulties of the postwar years should just look at some of Rühle's material: In May 1921

16.8 per cent of Nuremberg's 46,638 elementary school children had no shoes. In Munich during the 1919/20 winter about 35 per cent of the elementary school children had to walk to school, even when it was snowing, barefoot or without adequate footwear. In February 1920 out of 3.3 million school children in large German cities more than 200,000 had tuberculosis and more than 830,000 were seriously undernourished. These were conditions which nowadays one finds only in the ex-colonies of capitalism and in the slums of industrially-developed countries.

The communist children's groups and later on the Young Spartacus League (JSB) considered themselves as a conscious counterweight to the ongoing mental crippling of proletarian children in the schools. There were, of course, numerous elementary school teachers who loved their profession and their children. I remember many a teacher who treated us children with understanding and affection and awakened our intellectual interests. The fact that I enjoyed history and German language so much was due not only to the influence of my parents and the JSB but also to the education I received from such good teachers.

But not all teachers were like that. I have also had intolerant schoolmasters who made me feel that they did not like my membership in Young Spartacus at all. There were, mostly from Kaiser Wilhelm's time, real cane-wielders who wanted to beat into us, literally, what they considered "Prussian-German discipline". Young Spartacists defended themselves openly against such education methods. From April 1921 the newspaper *The Young Comrade* had a regular column "Our battle in the schools". Cane-wielders were exposed in cartoons such as "Bock the cane-wielder". The newspaper *Jung-Spartacus* which started publication in 1924 also gave voice to the school children's resistance to caning.

Today I cannot help smiling at the memory of our battle against the "forceful" arguments of a music teacher who used to keep a cane in his violin case. And if as happened now and then he forgot to bring his violin case along he would send a boy to fetch it. One day I was ordered to fetch it, and I opened the case on my way back, took out the cane, broke this symbol of humiliation into pieces and threw it into the Blies river. Naturally the cane-wielder got himself a new cane. But we had made our point and strengthened our self-confidence.

Throughout my life, experience has told me that we can never pay too much attention to children's mental interests and their striving for justice. Even now, after a lapse of over five decades, I remember one of the earliest

children's books I read. It was an amusing and yet thought-provoking story by Hermynia zur Mühlen, an authoress and translator who despite her noble birth sided early on with the revolutionary workers' movement. Her children's books were very much in demand. The story which I remember particularly well was entitled "The Sparrow" and was published, as I have recently ascertained, by the Association of International Publishers in Berlin in 1922. The sparrows were described in the colourfully-illustrated little book as the proletarians of the bird world. A young sparrow went in search of ■ country where there was no hunger or cold. But everywhere it found the rich and the poor, experienced the solidarity of the poor and met a boy who would change this world.

Another lasting experience from those years were the encounters between the children from Young Spartacus and communist children's groups from France. We met at Forbach and Ludweiler on the border between the Saarland and France and on the former battlefields of the Great War at Verdun. History lessons at school were still designed as chronicles of coronations and wars despite the efforts of a well-meaning teacher. A real battlefield with its miles of rows of war graves was certainly more illuminating than learning the dates of great battles by heart. Young Spartacus confronted the spirit of chauvinism and militarism with that of proletarian internationalism. This was then particularly important in the Saarland.

As already mentioned, the Saarland had been annexed by French occupation forces at the end of 1919. In the Versailles Treaty, which had been signed by the Social Democratic government and had come into force on 10 January 1920, the Saarland had been mandated to the League of Nations, whose "governing commission" gave French big business the opportunity to take the lion's share in the exploitation of the Saarland's natural wealth and its workers. The phrase "a land which has to serve two masters" was coined then and was expressive of the double exploitation to which the Saarland was subjected.

The mines, which had previously been owned by the Prussian Treasury, were immediately expropriated in favour of the French state and thus put into the hands of French industrial magnates. Stumm's successors had to hand over part of their steel empire to French monopolies but were richly compensated by the German government and invested the compensation partly in Rhineland and Westphalia. In 1923 about 60 per cent of the Saarland's heavy industry had passed into French ownership. Some of the big German industrialists, chiefly Hermann Röchling who later acquired a

reputation as one of the financial backers of the pro-fascist German Front, succeeded in making arrangements with the "French archenemy": Röchling, at first indicted by a French military court at Amiens for "theft and looting", welcomed the French troops at Völklingen as "liberators from the workers' and soldiers' council", promptly proceeded to deliver his "militarily important products" to France and was allowed to keep his factories. Profit knows no patriotism.

For us Honeckers national issues clearly took second place after social ones. We naturally followed with great interest what was happening in the Reich, the bourgeois Weimar Republic. We spoke German and saw ourselves as Germans all the time. My father was a member of the KPD, and I myself belonged to the Young Spartacus League. We read the German workers' press. There was actually at the time a German-language edition of *l'Humanité* for Alsace-Lorraine which sometimes found its way into the Saarland. We were certain that the Saarland would sometime be returned to Germany. Our question was whether that would be a capitalist or a socialist Germany, a Germany ruled by monopolies or a Germany where power was in the hands of the workers and peasants. We backed a socialist Germany, a Germany ruled by "councils", a "Soviet" Germany as the current phrase had it.

We were of course against the French occupation which at the beginning of 1923 extended as far as the Ruhr area. But that did not make us "arch-enemies" of France at all. On the contrary: we honoured the revolutionary tradition of France, particularly the heroes of the Paris Commune of 1871. We considered ourselves class brothers of the French workers, particularly the French Communists with whom the Saarland KPD cooperated early on in actions against the common class enemy, the big monopolies.

The Versailles Treaty was considered a predatory treaty, an imperialist robbers' peace as Lenin had described it. The Versailles Treaty was comparable to the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk which German imperialists had forced on the young Soviet state in March 1918 and which Soviet Russia had then had to accept in order to gain some breathing-space.

However, while German imperialism made use of the Versailles Treaty to start a hypocritical nationalistic campaign of hate, we rejected the treaty mainly for social reasons: the Versailles *diktat* was a heavy burden for the German workers, peasants and shopkeepers and artisans. The huge reparation payments were loaded onto the shoulders of the working populace, the little people. They lost their savings, went hungry, lost their jobs and

subsistence while the monopolists feathered their nests with their war profits.

In the Saarland the workers were subjected to merciless exploitation, enforced by the bayonets of the French occupation forces. I remember the great strike battles of the Saarland miners in spring 1919 and especially in spring 1923. In March 1919 the conflict was about the 8-hour working day which the German workers had won during the November revolution. The French mine owners, who were not used to this in France, would not concede it in the Saarland either. The miners went on strike. The mine owners declared the strike a "hostile act directed against France" and brought in the military. Twenty-one were indicted in a military court and some were given long prison sentences. About 400 miners were expelled to Germany and thus condemned to unemployment. Under such pressure the strike front, which in any case lacked a unified leadership and clear direction, collapsed.

It was different in 1923 when 72,000 employees in the mining industry of the Saarland, that is 99 per cent of all its blue and white collar workers, went on strike for 100 days over the slump of real wages and for an 8-hour working day. Despite renewed terror from the mine owners and the occupation forces, the strike front held and achieved important if only partial success. Since miners in France were also on strike, supplies of coal to French heavy industry were in jeopardy, which forced the ruling circles to give in.

The reason why I remember so well the great sacrifices which the strikes demanded from the miners, is that the 100-day strike coincided with a family event. The strike started on 5 February 1923. On 12 February my youngest brother Robert, a "latecomer", was born. With a newborn child in the family it was difficult to live on the union's strike pay and on gifts from sympathetic shopkeepers. From my own memory I can confirm what Luitwin Bies has written in his informative book *Klassenkampf an der Saar 1919—1935: Die KPD im Sargebiet im Ringen um die soziale und nationale Befreiung des Volkes* (Class Struggle on the Saar 1919—1935: The KPD in the Saarland in the Struggle for the Social and National Liberation of the People) which was published in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1978.

During the strike the Saarland Communists had fought bravely and won increasing respect from Christian and Social Democratic workers and unionists. This found expression during the elections to the so-called *Landesrat*, a parliamentary institution which was meant to serve as a democratic fig leaf for the governing commission of the League of Nations, but was

used more and more by the Communists as a parliamentary platform in the political struggle.

In June 1922 when I joined the communist children's group the KPD had only two seats in the *Landesrat* (Centre Party 16, SPD 5). In January 1924 it had 5 seats (Centre 14, SPD 6). In March 1928 again 5 seats for the KPD (Centre 14, SPD 5). And in February 1932 our party won 8 seats (Centre 14, SPD 3).

Votes for the KPD also increased in elections to the district and municipal councils so that our party finally became the strongest working-class party in the Saarland. At Wiebelskirchen and Dudweiler and in other mining communities there were communist majorities at an early stage.

The Wiebelskirchen communist children's group had its share in these political successes. We were excited about each strike or election victory. We celebrated them as our successes, as the result of our songs, our leaflets, our newspaper sales, our flags and banners, our marches and rallies. And we had every right to do so.

The years with Young Spartacus gave my brothers and sisters and myself a lively and meaningful childhood. But they were also years of painful losses. In January 1924 the news of the death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin reached us. I remember hearing the words from Radio Moscow: "Lenin is dead but his work shall live forever." At Wiebelskirchen lessons at school were interrupted. A teacher described the work of Lenin as that of an important statesman. Exequies were held at the Neunkirchen assembly hall. From then on we had an "L.L.L. rally" every year in January in memory of Lenin, and of the German workers' leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht who had been murdered by reactionaries on 15 January 1919.

In spring 1925 we mourned a young comrade: Fritz Weineck, trumpeter in a band of the Red Fighting Front (RFB), a self-defence organisation of the revolutionary working class founded in summer 1924 following a decision by the Central Committee of the KPD. The cheerful young trumpeter was shot dead without cause by the Weimar Republic's police at a rally with Ernst Thälmann in the Volkspark at Halle on 13 March 1925. Another nine dead, 25 seriously wounded, and more than a hundred with lighter injuries were the victims of this brutal police attack. In honour of Fritz Weineck "The Song of the Little Trumpeter" was written which we sang frequently because besides sadness it also expresses revolutionary confidence.



Bandsmen of the Red Fighting Front in Wiebelskirchen ca. 1929:
Wilhelm Honecker is behind the big drum,
next to him first row, right) his son Erich.

III

Joining the party of Thälmann

At the beginning of December 1979 I received, in accordance with SED custom, from my party organisation the scroll and badge of honour for fifty years' membership in the party of the working class. In retrospect it feels as if this half century had just flown by. The circumstances in which I joined the party of Ernst Thälmann, the KPD, are as fresh in my memory as if it had all happened yesterday.

I joined the party in 1929 at a time of heightened social tensions and political controversy. The worldwide economic crisis was already looming on the horizon. Finally, on "Black Friday", 29 October 1929, the day of the great crash on the New York stock exchange, disaster struck with devastating effects. International capitalism suffered a collapse. Unemployment rose rapidly. Millions of people found themselves facing hunger and squalor. And certain imperialist circles began to promote more and more openly a new war of intervention against the Soviet Union where the first five-year plan was proving the superiority of the socialist planned economy over capitalism's profit and competition economy.

The aggravation of the worldwide class struggle had strengthened my desire to join the Communist Party. The KPD, which in March 1930 counted more than 135,000 members, was the only party which unerringly fought

for peace, work and bread, yet basically, joining the KPD and the full-time political activism which went with it were but natural consequences of my background, childhood and youth. My father was, as I have mentioned, an active member, and so were his closest friends at work. I myself had gained my first political experiences in the communist children's group and with Young Spartacus. After finishing school at Easter 1926, working with the KJVD soon became the most important part of my life.

We had a strong local KJVD branch then. My home village was a stronghold not only of the KPD but also of its young guard, the KJVD. After working first as treasurer of the local branch, I was entrusted with the political leadership of this group. From then on I also took part in the meetings of the KJVD sub-district committee at Neunkirchen. By the following year my young comrades had elected me on to the district committee of the KJVD of the Saarland, where I worked until the summer of 1933.

Anyone unfamiliar with the prevailing circumstances might think that my rapid rise as a political activist resulted from pronounced personal ambition. In reality this development just emerged from the political work itself. To the latter I had already devoted myself early on and wholeheartedly. I had a clear vision of political goals and worked actively to attain them: for the cause of the liberation of the working class and the whole working population. It would seem that I also had a certain gift for political work, willingness to learn, determination, self-discipline and an easy way of establishing contact with other young people. I simply enjoyed this kind of work, even though or perhaps precisely because it was so demanding.

In this connection, just to give an objective picture, I would like to mention how two people from the Saarland who have known me from those years remember the KJVD activist Erich Honecker. One of them, Artur Mannbar, a Communist, comrade-in-arms, and personal friend for many years, was like myself imprisoned at Brandenburg-Görden prison during the Nazi dictatorship and now lives in the GDR. The other, Erich Voltmer, is not a Communist and worked until recently as deputy editor-in-chief of the bourgeois *Saarbrücker Zeitung* in the FRG. In connection with an interview for his newspaper early in 1977 I met him again for the first time in decades.

"He was a magnificent comrade even then," writes Artur Mannbar about the KJVD activist Honecker. "The young people in his organisation trusted him. In the evenings after work we usually met at his place, the small, poor but spotlessly clean house of his parents. And while the young hotheads

debated the work of their group Honecker's mother prepared sandwiches and coffee. The father was usually away somewhere. He, the miner, was highly esteemed by all the workers at his mine."

Erich Voltmer, when asked by a West Berlin radio station about his memories under the linden tree at Wiebelskirchen, replied: "This is the place where we met for discussions more than 40 years ago—Communists, Social Democrats, the Catholic youth. Honecker was one of the spokesmen, indeed *the* spokesman of the Communists. Sometimes we talked all night long. The place for political discussions was in the street. And Honecker was the unsurpassed spokesman of the Communists."

Voltmer remembers further that the "political debates were usually very loud, but Honecker was an exception. He was no shouter, he tried to convince by means of reasoning." The reporter, who was employed by a radio station which had been founded during the cold war against the GDR, then asked the Saarbrücken newspaperman: "It has been said that Honecker neither drank nor smoked. Was he really that strict?" And Voltmer answered: "Yes, absolutely."

I would not put it so absolutely myself. I was neither ■ saint nor a "wet blanket". I did like a glass of beer then even though money was short and I knew that alcohol could be a dangerous enemy of the working man. Later on I also smoked but at a more advanced age gave it up on medical advice. My activity in the workers' sports and athletics club "Fichte" contributed to a healthy way of life. I took part in gymnastics and played handball. I was also closely associated with the Young Friends of Nature.

The KJVD was ■ unified youth organisation to which both girls and boys belonged. Politically as well as personally we formed a sworn community with worldly-minded principles geared to the future. Girls were treated equally as comrades. They were respected, and what they had to say was listened to. One could rely on them. In demonstrations they were always in the front rank. Nowadays, particularly in socialist countries, such equality of rights may seem no more than normal. But in those days it meant an open, radical break with the prevailing bourgeois conventions.

To be sure, in most working-class families wife and daughters traditionally took a much more active part than in bourgeois circles where marriage was often regarded as a contract for material support. The KJVD adopted the progressive features of the proletarian way of life in this respect as well. Once, on a farm in Pomerania in the mid-twenties I found out for the first time how different life in a proletarian family was from the ways and habits other

families adhered to. The first long journey of my life not only took me right ~~across~~ the "Reich" from its southwestern corner right up to the northeast; it also provided me with new experiences of life, including one that I found surprising and curious: in the depths of rural Pomerania, wives still addressed their husbands with the formal "Sie" instead of "du"!

What had taken me to Pomerania? That is quickly told. The 100-day strike of 1923 had focussed international attention on the social plight of the Saarland miners. The governing commission of the League of Nations found itself compelled to take certain social measures against the most obvious signs of privation. Funds were made available to investigate school-children's health. A scheme for sending children to the countryside was introduced at this time. Since my sister Käthe suffered from severe tuberculosis I spent the summer vacation in the country during the last two years at school, and so I came to Neudorf in Pomerania, to a medium-sized farm owned by a man called Streich. Neudorf in the rural district of Bublitz was about 15 miles north of what was then Neustettin and about 18 miles west of the German-Polish border as it then stood.

Farmer Streich had six daughters but no son. Four of the daughters were already married. The farmer himself was unable to do much physical work due to war injuries so that the burden of work fell on the wife, the two unmarried daughters, a farm-hand and myself. Reapers from Poland came for the harvest. Scythes and flails were still the tools used. I liked it on the farm even though I had to sleep in a shed next to the horses' stable, just like the farm-hand. When upon finishing school at Easter 1926 I could not, on account of the economic situation, find a suitable apprenticeship at Wiebelskirchen, my parents and I agreed that it was best for me to go back to Pomerania and work on the land. I stayed with farmer Streich who also accommodated my sister Gertrud during summer vacations until I returned to the Saarland. After that I worked for a while with my uncle Ludwig Weidenhof as a tiler's mate until I found an apprenticeship with master tiler Müller at Neunkirchener Strasse, Wiebelskirchen.

It may be that farmer Streich had come to like me and perhaps imagined me as a future son-in-law, the more so as the farm-hand had left, and there were increasing signs of crisis in agriculture. In any case he allowed me—as indeed the only "Neudorfer" to be so privileged—to take part in May Day demonstrations in Bublitz and to cooperate with the Communists who came to the village as propagandists of the KPD. But in no way did he share my political views. Even the farm-hand, really a labourer like myself at the time,

had such prejudices against the Communists that he could not get the idea out of his head that rural propagandists of the KPD "must be well paid" by their party for their Sunday work in the villages.

In reality the KPD at that time could not even offer its full-time activists adequate pay, let alone the propagandists. A few years later when I was working practically full-time at the KJVD district office at Saarbrücken the KJVD could not pay me a regular salary. I lived off the few francs (the franc was legal tender in the Saarland from June 1923 till February 1935) which came from the Saarbrücken branch of the Neuer Deutscher Verlag für Zeitschriftenwerbung und Literaturvertrieb which was managed by Willi Münzenberg. The rural propagandists usually cycled to the villages because there was no money for public transport fares. They answered the call of the party out of conviction.

In late autumn 1925 Ernst Thälmann had been elected chairman of the KPD. Under his leadership the party overcame the left-wing sectarian and the right-wing opportunist tendencies which had hampered its development during the early '20s. Thälmann's style of leadership, modelled on Lenin's principles and on the experiences of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, contributed decisively to the development of the KPD as a militant Marxist-Leninist party which maintained close contacts with the masses. Its influence on the working class, on other working people and on part of the intelligentsia grew year by year. The appeal "Face the villages", issued in February 1926, was one of the first important documents of the party Central Committee's Marxist-Leninist alliance policy.

"The Communist Party considers it one of its main tasks to unite the rural and the industrial working population" ran the KPD's appeal. The party turned its attention above all to the farm labourers and smallholders. It proposed to fight for a programme of immediate remedies (minimum wages, average 8-hour working day, social security and non-tied housing for farm-workers, tax reductions, government mortgages, subsidies and guaranteed markets for smallholders), and long-term expropriation of the large estates in favour of agricultural workers, smallholders and tenant farmers. The KPD developed its principles on agricultural policy realistically and flexibly during the following years right up to the Farm Aid Programme of May 1931, the realisation of which would have secured a livelihood for countless German farmers and given them an assured future.

The perspicacity of the KPD's February 1926 appeal was proved during the 1927/28 winter when I was still at Neudorf. In January 1928 the farmers

revolted, particularly in Schleswig-Holstein. Tens of thousands demonstrated, not under the red flag but under black flags, for an agricultural policy that would halt the growing number of distress warrants and compulsory sales. As early ■ 1928 the total indebtedness of German agriculture amounted to 10.8 billion Reichsmark. Countless small and medium holdings were so deeply in debt that often they had to pawn their whole harvest before it was brought in, just in order to pay interest and taxes.

Between January and September 1928 some 1,185 farms of less than 20 hectares each went up for compulsory sale. During the same period of the following year the number reached 1,709. But the Reich government of the day, the "Grand Coalition" in office since 28 June 1928 under the right-wing Social Democrat Hermann Müller, made no move to change the unjust tax system which imposed the highest per hectare rates on the smallest farmers. Instead a further "Aid for the East" law was passed on 16 May 1929 which gave millions from the treasury to the big landowners east of the Elbe.

Paradoxically, this reactionary agricultural policy drove many ■ desperate farmer into the arms of the worst reactionaries, namely the Nazis, in the late '20s and early '30s. The hypocritical slogan about "interest serfdom" was quite specifically aimed at farmers, artisans and shopkeepers whose very existence had been put at risk. As was to be expected, the Nazis did nothing to abolish this "serfdom" when they came to power on 30 January 1933. Instead they embarked on a relentless drive for war, following an unscrupulous economic and agricultural policy in the interests of big business and the militarist big estate owners.

The compulsory sales of farms and the bankruptcies of artisans and small retailers were not at all halted after 1933 but continued, partly enhanced by racist laws. True, the number of compulsory sales of farms of less than 20 hectares dropped to 1,394 from its peak of 5,820 in 1932 at the height of the agricultural crisis, but it climbed back to 2,125 in 1935, and until the Second World War remained above the 1928 level. Developments were similar for artisans and small retailers.

The communists, among them the propagandists who came to Neudorf to explain the KPD's agricultural policy, had warned and predicted that Hitler's fascism, far from helping the farmers and shopkeepers, would hurl them into a bloody war. This required not only patience and perseverance but also prudence and a lot of courage. Most of the titled and untitled big estate owners were dyed-in-the-wool anti-communists with ■ traditional

inclination towards violence. In the Weimar Republic the estates of the *Junkers* east of the Elbe were the favourite haunts of clandestine military groups, such as the *Freikorps* and the *Schwarze Reichswehr* as well as of other counter-revolutionary organisations. The big estates were the socio-economic mainstay of Prussian-German militarism which survived unscathed in the Weimar Republic. The estates were breeding places for political coups against the republic and for terrorism against the workers' movement.

Unfortunately I do not know what became of farmer Streich and his big family; when I returned to the Saarland we lost touch, and I have not heard from them since. The fascist war of aggression having deprived millions of farmers of their livelihood if not of their lives, I can only hope that farmer Streich of Neudorf and his likeable daughters survived the war safe and sound and that they have found a new home. I can only hope that they learned the right historical lessons from all the sad events.

My trips from Wiebelskirchen to Neudorf and back again involved stop-overs in Berlin. Although I did little more than change trains there, the capital of the Reich and of the "Free State of Prussia", with its population of 2.6 million, held a great fascination for me. From the first glance it was apparent that Berlin was a city of labour, a city of workers. I had read in an article which Egon Erwin Kisch had written for the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* that no other city among the capitals of Europe could lay equal claim to being such a working-class stronghold. At that time I was in no position to judge this assertion, but later, after I had visited the chief cities of other capitalist countries such as Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Vienna and Prague, I found Kisch's observation confirmed.

The character of Berlin as an administrative centre and as an industrial city found expression in its political climate. It traditionally voted left-wing. A few years later in the Reichstag elections of September 1930, the KPD obtained most of the votes. For the first time ever the capital of a capitalist country had a majority of communist voters. A young man from the "red village" of Wiebelskirchen could not be expected to resist the spell of the "red metropolis".

But at the end of the twenties the great city on the river Spree had many other attractions besides. Such world-renowned scientists as Albert Einstein and Max Planck worked there. Berlin was also an international centre of the theatre. It was here that Bertolt Brecht hit the headlines with his *Three-penny Opera*. It was here that in 1929 Friedrich Wolf's *Cyankali* was first produced on the stage, a strong attack on the infamous Section 218 of the

penal code, which deprived women of their right to decide the number and spacing of children. Near Berlin was the world's biggest film centre after Hollywood. And many renowned poets and authors lived here, for instance Heinrich Mann, Erich Weinert (whom I got to know personally a few years later during the struggle in the Saarland), Ludwig Renn (with whom I later formed a personal friendship) and Alfred Döblin, whose well-known novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* appeared at that time.

Berlin had its own newspaper district with some internationally recognised dailies and brilliant journalists, the best of whom were left-wing or, like Egon Erwin Kisch, even Communist. Berlin with its leading international electrical concerns like Siemens & Halske and AEG had powerful radio stations from which, however, progressive journalists were practically barred. Development work on television was going on in Berlin even then. And Berlin was a city full of historical traditions.

Taking the relatively short walk from the Stettin to the Potsdam or Anhalt railway station one passed many of the historic places associated with the 1848 and the 1918/19 revolutions. One had to cross the Potsdamer Platz where on 1 May 1916 Karl Liebknecht had shouted his "Down with the war", "Down with the government". A small detour took one to what was then the Bülow-Platz with its Karl Liebknecht House, which in November 1926 became the headquarters of the Central Committee of the KPD under Ernst Thälmann. However, I was not to meet the party chairman, whom the workers called "Teddy", until two years later at the national Easter Youth Congress of the KJVD at Leipzig in 1930.

But now on my return from Pomerania to the Saarland I passed through Berlin-Lichterfelde railway station, where Joseph Goebbels—Gauleiter of the Nazi Party in Berlin since the end of 1926—had demonstrated on Sunday, 20 March 1927, the terrorist methods with which the Nazis (the German abbreviation for "National Socialists" as the German fascists demagogically called themselves) intended to seize power.

On that Sunday in March Goebbels had assembled more than 500 Nazi thugs to ambush a passenger train in which 23 members of a band of the Red Fighting Front (RFB) were returning to town from an outing. When the train pulled in Goebbels had the carriage in which our comrades were travelling fired on with revolvers. Then his bully boys attacked with daggers and clubs and before the Social Democrat-controlled police moved in, most of our comrades had been so seriously injured that they had to be hospitalised.

I remember this attack which the workers' press reported extensively at the time, because at Wiebelskirchen we had also had an RFB band since 1925/26 in which my father played the big drum and to which my brother Willi and I also belonged. It was ■ *Schalmeienkapelle** the peculiar timbre of which was particularly well suited to workers' marches and which therefore was very popular with them. We were wearing the grey uniforms of the RFB (see the photograph at the beginning of this chapter). There were no gangs of Nazi thugs in the Saarland that would have dared to attack our band.

Today there is still a *Schalmeienkapelle* at Wiebelskirchen which carries on the traditions of our band. The band which took part in the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin in 1973 has made me an honorary member.

My uncle, the tiler Ludwig Weidenhof, was politically on our side, so I had no difficulties in taking part in outings and other activities. Nor did my boss, master tiler Müller, take ■ petty attitude. Despite my political activities I learned my craft well. I had come to like it because it provided a certain freedom. One got around, saw the world from above, was always able to "rise to the heights" and feel the excitement of a job which was not without dangers and which always demanded alertness, caution, precision and agility. Later on, during my imprisonment at Brandenburg-Görden, these skills were to prove useful to me.

As a tiler I did of course join a union, the woodworkers' federation, but my main political activity was in the KJVD. Highlights of the work in the youth federation were the annual national youth congresses. For working-class girls and boys, travelling was itself a source of unforgettable experiences. It was a rarity for them. We had to save up for the travel expenses centime by centime or pfennig by pfennig. All the greater was the joy of travelling together and meeting thousands of young comrades and friends who came from everywhere in order to demonstrate for their goals.

The 5th National Youth Congress of the KJVD in April 1930 at Leipzig brought together tens of thousands of young Communists and numerous groups of the Socialist Workers's Youth (SAJ) and young Christian workers. The Saarland KJVD had made special efforts to get young Christian miners to participate in the Leipzig gathering. Like many other young Communists

*The *Schalmei* is a traditional German brass instrument consisting of several tubes.

from the Saarland I was very keen to be there too. This put a particular strain on the pocket of each individual. In my case it meant selling the bicycle my parents had given me so as to raise the cost of the fare to Leipzig. This I did not without a wrench. But it was worth it. About 100,000 came to the great rally addressed by Ernst Thälmann. For the first time I experienced at close quarters the charisma of this working-class personality who was already almost a legend.

Thälmann, the broad-shouldered Hamburg docker knew from personal experience the deprivations of the German proletariat and its willingness to fight. He had the confidence of the proletarians like no other workers' leader in Germany. His language was the workers' language: simple, clear and distinct. Thälmann held a few notes with some key phrases in his hand. His speech, delivered without microphone or loudspeakers, rang out across the vast Augustus-Platz (now Karl-Marx-Platz). He emphasised important passages with powerful movements of his arm, fist clenched. What he had to say was serious, admonitory and full of warning, as befitted the seriousness of the crisis. I remember this sentence: "The KPD is united with the youth of the proletariat in its battle against exploitation and oppression, come what may."

During the National Youth Congress the Leipzig police, controlled by right-wing Social Democrats, attacked the working-class youth and girls with brute force. They even fired into the crowd during clashes. While we Communists worked actively towards a united antifascist front there were such right-wing leaders of the SPD as the Prussian Interior Minister Carl Severing or the Berlin chief of police Karl Friedrich Zörgiebel who gave orders to fire on the Communists, and who supported, at least in effect, Hitlerite fascism by a policy of appeasement. Severing had banned the RFB, and Zörgiebel was responsible for the bloody events of May 1929 when 31 workers were murdered by police.

When nowadays certain bourgeois ideologues in the FRG try to claim seriously that the KPD was to blame for Hitler's seizure of power then I must emphasise the historical truth: the KPD was the most determined opponent of Nazism. In the antifascist resistance the Communists always set a shining example, indomitable in the face of Nazi terror, faithful to their convictions unto death.

Thus too in Leipzig in 1930 our main concern was a united proletarian front, coordinated action by young Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats and Christians in the struggle against the growing Nazi threat. This

goal, and the determination to defend the Soviet Union actively in the event of ■ new war of intervention by the imperialist powers, were at the centre of the Leipzig National Youth Congress. For this the Saarland KJVD fought with all its strength.

I myself was to embark upon ■ great experience soon after the Leipzig gathering: my first visit to the land of the Soviets.



As a student at the Lenin School
of the Communist International,
Moscow 1930—31.



The Lenin School as it then stood.

IV

Encounter with the country of Lenin

My first stay in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the country of Lenin, between August 1930 and August 1931 was of great importance for my future life. The party and its youth organisation had put me forward for a study course run by the Communist Youth International, which was to be held at the Lenin School of the Communist International in Moscow. My parents agreed to my taking this course. And so, just before my 18th birthday I went, filled with expectations, on the long trip from the Saarland via Berlin, Warsaw, Brest, Minsk and Smolensk to Moscow.

The Soviet Union was not altogether alien to me even before the long trip. As a young Communist I had always taken a lively interest in the land of Red October, which I knew from stories told by comrades, reports in our press, from books and exciting Soviet films. To this extent I had long felt familiar with the first socialist country in the world. Following its example we, as the young guard of the proletarian revolution and the party of Ernst Thälmann, wanted to change society in Germany for the benefit of the workers and the whole working population in a revolutionary manner. However, to see the country of Lenin with one's own eyes was quite a different thing compared to even the best reports, the most fascinating books and the most beautiful films.

To this day I remember the train crossing the Polish-Soviet border slowly between Baranovichy and Minsk by first light. Polish soldiers with fixed bayonets jumped off the train and Red Army men climbed on. For me this was an enormously symbolic event. We were crossing a very special border, not just an ordinary border between any two countries, not a border like the one between the Saarland and France or between the Saarland and the Reich. No, this was a completely different border, a dividing line between two worlds, a border where the power of capitalism ended and where the power of the workers and peasants began, a border comparable to the present one between the FRG and the GDR.

In early 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had declared that proletarians had no fatherland in a capitalist world. The Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 had since created a new situation. From now on the revolutionaries who were suppressed, persecuted, threatened with imprisonment and death could find refuge and help in the land of the Soviets. The country of Lenin had literally become the fatherland of the working people. This is where Communists from all over the world would come to draw counsel, strength and confidence for their revolutionary struggle.

For me too, the country of Lenin was my fatherland, its party my party, its youth organisation my youth organisation. I looked at the Red Army men who jumped on the footboards of the wagons as my brothers and comrades even though I did not know them personally. I would have liked to embrace and kiss them Russian fashion because they represented the country of the workers and peasants, because on their caps they wore the red star which was also the emblem of the KPD. This star had been dear to me since childhood. It shone into the future.

Yes, it was a great thing to travel to this country, to live and study there for a prolonged period of time. "Workers of all lands, unite!" read the inscription on a banner spanning the railway track like a triumphal arch at the Soviet border station Negoreloye which was often mentioned then. To read the traditional battle cry of the *Communist Manifesto* as an official welcome message from a great country was an unforgettable experience for me. I was in the land of my dreams. After a short stop the train rolled on, headed for Moscow.

On arrival at the Soviet capital's Byelorussian Station everything was new to me. The people on the platform, in the station building and on the station square gave me a first idea of the ethnic variety of the USSR. I did not

understand a word of Russian and was supposed to find my own way to the Hotel Lux—yet I felt in no way lonely or abandoned. What is now Gorki Street, which leads from the Byelorussian Station to Red Square, was then called Tverskaya. I walked along to have a first look round this legendary city in which the heart of the world revolution was beating.

Tverskaya was a wide street. It had old-fashioned cobble-stone pavements. There was, of course, no sign of the heavy motor traffic that passes through it nowadays. In the '20s there was already some manufacture of motor vehicles in the Soviet Union but in 1930 the larger automobile factories were still under construction in Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod on the Volga, the birthplace of Maxim Gorki, after whom it was later renamed. As I knew from press reports, the first Soviet-designed trucks had just come off the production line there in February 1930. No wonder then that half a year later peasant carts were still the dominant feature in Moscow street traffic.

There were many shops in Tverskaya but no displays. Instead there were posters in the windows calling for the attainment ahead of schedule of the targets set in the first Five-Year Plan which was introduced in 1929. I knew that certain foodstuffs and other everyday consumer goods had been rationed in order to secure distribution in accordance with work performance. But this did not surprise me. A few years ago it had been no different in the Saarland. And I had never had enough money to buy the things I wanted and which were so plentifully displayed in shop windows. The most important thing for me was to be in the land of Red October where — since Lenin's death in 1924 under the leadership of Stalin—socialism was being energetically built up; with great sacrifices certainly, but even greater enthusiasm.

In Red Square, to which I was almost magnetically drawn, construction of the Lenin mausoleum as we now know it was almost finished. The new monument built of red Ukrainian granite and Karelian porphyry would be solemnly unveiled a short time later in November 1930 on the anniversary of the October Revolution. Before then there had been a wooden mausoleum which I knew from photographs. Pictures of demonstrations and parades in Red Square, and of the mausoleum with leading representatives of the land of the Soviets on the platform, were distributed throughout the world even then. Stalin, beside him Molotov, Kaganovich, Kalinin, Voroshilov, and Budyonny as well as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Rykov and Kamenev, these were the most important names which then stood for the victorious proletarian revolution.

I knew the *ABC of Communism* which Bukharin had written together with Preobrazhenski, a much-read “popular explanation of the programme of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)”. The work was first published in Soviet Russia at the end of 1919 and was available in a German translation as early as 1921. Along with *Wages, Prices and Profit* and *Wage Labour and Capital* by Karl Marx it was one of my father’s books. Now at the International Lenin School in Moscow I would have to study it more closely.

Even though the Comintern’s Hotel Lux was in Tverskaya I did not find it the first time I walked down the street. So I went back to the station to get a hackney cab or a taxi. One of the drivers understood quickly where I wanted to go. He knew the Lux, laughed at the short distance and dropped me off at the right entrance. At the Lux, which had been fitted out on Lenin’s instructions as a guest house for the Comintern, they knew who I was and where I ~~was~~ to go. They explained the way to the headquarters of the Comintern. The building was near the Kremlin on the battlements of which one could still see the tsarist eagle.

Fortunately I met a young German female comrade whom I saw again a few years later at underground meetings and who now lives in the GDR as a fighter for our cause. She was Lea Lichter, later the wife of Fritz Grosse, a tried and true activist of the KJVD. She was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Nazis in 1936 and entered the diplomatic service of the GDR after liberation. Lea Lichter arranged for a Comintern car to take me to the International Lenin School which was then in Ulitsa Vorovskogo.

Vorovski Street, west of the Alexander Garden, was named after a close friend and comrade-in-arms of Lenin and one of the Bolshevik old guard. While Soviet ambassador in Switzerland Vorovski had been murdered by the Whites. During the transport of his body from Lausanne to Moscow Berlin Communists had paid their last respects to him at the Schlesischer Bahnhof (now the Ostbahnhof railway station of the GDR capital). At the improvised nocturnal obsequies with torches and red flags Karl Radek accused the men behind the murder.

At the Lenin School I immediately felt at home. The enrolment formalities completed, I went to my room which I shared with Anton Ackermann, later an alternate member of the Politbureau of the SED, proud in the knowledge that I was now a student of Lenin in the truest sense of the word.

Among the many professors—and a few generals—who familiarised us with the various aspects of the theory and practice of Leninism, were Fred

Oelssner and Erich Wollenberg. I was to see Fred Oelssner again in Berlin after 1945; he was then a member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED responsible for agitation and propaganda. Erich Wollenberg, who lectured on history and contemporary issues of the workers' movement, I knew from his book *Als Rotarmist vor München—Reportage aus der Münchner Räterepublik* (As a Red Army man before Munich—A Report from the Munich Soviet Republic) which had been published by the Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag in Berlin in 1929.

Wollenberg later on joined Trotskyist groups, and after 1945 played an odious role in the propaganda campaign launched by the USA and the FRG against the Soviet Union and the GDR. But at the time he helped me towards a deeper understanding of Lenin's revolutionary teaching and of life in Lenin's country. After all, he had proved himself in the class struggle for more than a decade.

At the time Moscow had a special atmosphere. These were the years of the socialist offensive on all fronts. What was meant by this slogan was spelled out by the 16th Congress of the CPSU. The Party Congress took place at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre from 26 June to 13 July 1930. About 2,000 delegates, elected representatives of the nearly two million members of the party of Lenin, drew up a balance-sheet and set new targets: industrialisation of the country was to be accelerated and the targets of the Five-Year Plan to be achieved in four years. Agriculture was to be collectivised throughout and the kulaks abolished as a class. The technical equipment of the armed forces was to be radically improved in accordance with latest requirements, and the necessary factories were to be built.

The CPSU kept strictly to the course prescribed by Lenin. Under the leadership of the party the Soviet Union developed into an industrial power. A modern heavy industry was created, capable of producing all machinery and equipment necessary for technical reconstruction in all sectors of the economy. In 1930 the production of capital goods was 2.8 times that of 1913. Accelerated industrial growth was as necessary for the new society as was complete collectivisation. The Party Congress condemned attempts by the right-wing opposition to reduce the pace of development. It appealed to the heroism of the Soviet people and ordered the Central Committee "to secure a pace of socialist development befitting the Bolshevik party".

Half a century has passed since then. After the experiences of these five decades, particularly those of the Second World War, there can be no doubt that the pace of development insisted upon then was objectively necessary.

There was no comfortable way. It was a matter of life or death for socialism. During those harsh years of accelerated industrialisation and complete collectivisation, when there was much to do and little to eat, the foundation stone was laid with unrivalled heroism for the later victory of the Soviet people over the fascist intruders and also for the liberation of our own people from the scourge of the swastika.

In order to appreciate the historic achievement of the Soviet people during those years one has to visualise the internal and external conditions under which it took place. In the early '20s there was reason to expect that the proletarian revolution might succeed in Germany or in another industrially developed country which would have made the emergence of the Soviet people from inherited backwardness and the shambles left by the war that much easier. The relative stabilisation of capitalism in the mid '20s, however, indicated that the Soviet Union was likely to remain the only socialist country for some time and that it would have to achieve its socialist development utterly on its own. In the late '20s when the capitalist world economic crisis loomed there was a danger of a new imperialist war of intervention against the country of Lenin which had just completed a period of economic reconstruction and where in 1930 for the first time industrial production exceeded agricultural production in value.

Simultaneously with the new threat of imperialist aggression there arose an intensification of the class struggle inside the Soviet country. There was still a relatively powerful class of exploiters which dreamed of a restoration of capitalist conditions and on which the hopes of international counter-revolution were concentrated: the kulaks. In 1928 the kulaks made a countrywide attempt to withhold grain from the Soviet government. They wanted to extract economic and political concessions. When the Soviet state did not accommodate them they turned to outright sabotage. Grain stores were set on fire, cattle were poisoned. They did not even shrink from murder and terror.

The only possible answer to these counter-revolutionary activities was the formation of collective economic units of the small and medium farmers. In order to protect them and strengthen them, the kulaks (who in most cases had grabbed the best stretches of land) had to be expropriated. The pace of this development was dictated by the nature of the issue; it was a revolutionary landslide. Early in 1930 most farms had already been combined into collective units. Tens of thousands of Communists, above all Kom-somols, joined the kolkhozes to support their development. But this was not

enough. The large fields cried out for machines, above all tractors. The completion of the Stalingrad tractor factory had to be accelerated. What many experts had considered impossible was made a reality by the "shock brigades". In the summer of 1930 the factory went into production. To safeguard its production the build-up of the new metallurgical base in the Ural mountains had to be accelerated because substantial imports of steel from capitalist countries were not possible. More steel was also needed for the modernisation of the country's defences.

In short, one thing conditioned the other. In order to break out of this vicious circle practically everything had to be done at the same time and at increasing speed. What this meant to the working people in concrete terms, I experienced for myself at Magnitogorsk, as a member of an international brigade during several weeks of work. I shall come back to that. In any case, by then I had no doubt about the rightness and necessity of the socialist offensive on all fronts under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, its Central Committee under Stalin's guidance which created the decisive prerequisites for the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War and for the further successful development of the Soviet land.

I twice came near to Stalin during my stay in Moscow. During the 9th Congress of the Leninist Young Communist League, the Komsomol, from 16 to 26 January 1931 at the Bolshoi Theatre I sat four rows behind him on the platform committee, and I saw him at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet in the Great Hall of the Kremlin. Erich Wollenberg had got me in. On the steps of the Great Hall of the Kremlin there came towards us the legendary cavalry general Budyonny on whose strategy in the battle against the White Army the AIZ had just published a fascinating story. Wollenberg, who knew Budyonny personally, introduced me. To this day I am grateful to Wollenberg for this even though, as previously mentioned, he later defected to the enemy. I also met Karl Radek and got to know not only his famous jokes, but also the man himself as a person. If I remember correctly he, like Bukharin who was considered the leading brain of the right-wing opposition, was writing important articles for *Izvestia*. Another encounter I should not like to omit was that with Max Hoelz, the legendary figure from the March struggles in central Germany in 1921. With this man, who had had to spend several years in the prisons of the Weimar Republic, we celebrated New Year's Eve 1930/31 at the Hotel Lux.

More important than such encounters, however, were the studies at the Lenin School, the participation in community life in Moscow and the contact

with the city's working people. I was disciplined and keen in my studies as befitted a working-class youth. Years later Soviet comrades gave me copies of reports on me from the archives of the Lenin School. Amongst these documents was a final assessment: "He has shown interest and talent in his studies; a strong and independent youth; recommended to sit the examination." The written tests were marked "Good", as were the results of the oral tests. The evaluation continues: "A gifted and hard-working comrade. Participated actively in conferences and consultations. Has thoroughly grasped the substance of the course. Understands quite well how to link theory with practice in the class struggle in Germany. A conscientious student; acquired knowledge: Grade 5".

I had reason to be satisfied with a "5", the highest mark in the Russian scale, because alongside our actual studies we were also involved in the life of the community. I became a member of the Komsomol. We took part in the elections to the Moscow City Soviet and even sent a representative to the city cleansing commission. We went regularly on work details in factories. As we could not get tickets for the demonstration and parade on the anniversary of the October Revolution and for the May Day celebrations, we watched from the roofs, a favourite pastime with Muscovite youths in which I, as a trained tiler, was of course happy to take part. Another kind of sport was closely connected with our studies. I shall never forget the last time we rode on horseback through the streets of Moscow on 2 May 1931.

Our links with the public not only increased our knowledge of the Russian language but also gave us an insight into many a social problem. The accelerated industrialisation demanded enormous investments. There was little left for housing construction. The scars of the war and the civil war had not yet quite healed. Whole city quarters consisted of pre-revolutionary wooden houses. In the streets one still met speculators from the time of the New Economic Policy who offered scarce merchandise at black market prices. And there were also still the *besprizorniye*, orphaned and homeless youths, flotsam and jetsam of the civil war. Despite the many homes and children's colonies they slept in the open air and warmed themselves in winter at the public fires in streets and squares.

Accelerated industrialisation helped to solve such problems too. There was no longer unemployment in the Soviet Union. And the demand for labour grew day by day. The whole country was in a learning process. The last remaining illiterates were entering classrooms. There was a big shortage

of skilled labour. In many places one met foreign specialists, amongst them progressive architects from Germany, representatives of the Bauhaus school who were infected by the enthusiasm of the Soviet construction workers and achieved great results under difficult circumstances. Countless young Soviet citizens prepared themselves with zeal to become specialists. Work discipline on the shop floor improved, an important factor considering the hundreds of thousands of unskilled workers that were streaming into the factories. I experienced that at Elektrozavod, Moscow's most important electrical plant where I was detailed to work as a welder during my studies.

Often we were guests at communes. Many young couples looked upon communes as a new form of living together. Under the given material conditions this was at least practical. We could help one another and make better use of available living space. Relationships between couples were no looser for that; indeed they were rather more stable than in the traditional way of life. As I became friendly with many Komsomols during my work details at the Elektrozavod I gained an insight into this side of life as well.

In the circumstances of intensified class struggle and in the interest of the personal security of comrades from capitalist countries, the courses at the International Lenin School were subject to certain rules of secrecy. Thus I was given the cover name Fritz Molter in Moscow. This name is also on the questionnaire which I filled in at the school and of which I now also have a copy. The name Erich Honecker does not appear there at all while all other personal data (date and place of birth, social background, professional and political development, posts held etc.) are correct.

The questions asked in several languages: "Did you take an active part in the civil war, in strikes etc.; if yes, when, where and how did you participate?" I answered truthfully: "Strikes. Illegal distribution of leaflets at the Neunkirchen iron works in February 1930". This was at the memorial for the iron and steel magnate "King Stumm" which stands in front of the entrance to the Neunkirchen iron works to this day. I haven often stood near to that monument and distributed leaflets. Likewise I considered my work detail of several weeks in summer 1931 at the V. I. Lenin Metallurgical Works at Magnitogorsk as part of the class struggle against armament profiteers like Stumm.

A group of 28 German Young Communists, we were sent as an "international shock brigade" to the southern Urals to help with the construction of this priority project of the first Five-Year Plan. Working conditions were unimaginably difficult. Where there are now comfortable high-rise blocks

of flats and the many well-designed public buildings of a modern socialist town of 340,000 inhabitants, there were then only tents and mud huts in the open desolate steppe. Food was of variable quality. Construction workers, mostly newly recruited peasants, ~~were~~ still wearing, as I remember, home-made raffia shoes. At night when the noise of work subsided, songs rang out across the steppe, Russian folk songs and songs of the revolution.

Where there had been nothing but a virtually untouched iron ore mountain until 1929 pig iron was first produced in 1932. In July 1933 the first steel was produced. During the Second World War Magnitogorsk was already the backbone of the Soviet Union's defence effort. Every third shell and every other tank was made from Magnitogorsk steel. With them the fascist aggressors were at last decisively defeated—a lesson for all future armament profiteers and imperialist “world conquerors”.

At the beginning of the socialist offensive on all fronts the bourgeois press in Western Europe and the USA had sneered that the targets of the Five-Year Plan would be achieved in 50 years at best. In 1931, when the first factories started production the forecasters became more careful. Respect for the achievements of the Soviet people was voiced amongst bourgeois experts. The then largest iron works in the world, the Harris works in the USA, had been constructed over a period of ten to twelve years. The Magnitogorsk iron and steel works had taken only about a third of that time. And Elektrozavod Moscow had achieved its production targets under the first Five-Year Plan by 31 March 1931, that is within two and a half years.

The success of the Soviet people quickened the struggle of the Communists in capitalist countries. The communist press reported the gigantic events in the land of Red October. Often there were no adequate words to express the colossal scale of revolutionary achievements. The journal *Youth International* reported also on the work details of young comrades in international shock brigades. The editor of *Youth International* at the time was Otto Winzer, later foreign minister of the GDR for many years.

The speedy progress of those years offered subject matter for important literary works not only to Soviet authors—to mention just *Virgin Soil Upturned* by Mikhail Sholokhov or Nikolai Ostrovski's *How the Steel Was Tempered*—but also inspired many a progressive artist in capitalist countries. Egon Erwin Kisch, who in 1927 had written his first book on the Soviet Union, *Czars, Priests and Bolsheviks*, was again in the land of Red October in 1930 and 1931. Together with Anna Seghers, Hans Marchwitza and Johannes R. Becher, he took part in the Kharkov congress of proletarian

revolutionary writers and gathered his impressions of the Central Asian Soviet republics for his book *Changing Asia* which was published in 1932.

A particularly impressive document of the struggle of those years is the book *A World in which Tomorrow is Already History* in which Julius Fučík, the Czech communist writer executed by the Nazis in Berlin-Plötzensee in 1943, wrote about his travels in the Soviet Union in 1930. It has been said that Fučík's friends had advised him to drop the obscure title and jokingly suggested the title "A world according to an upside-down calendar". But Fučík stuck to his apparently paradoxical title which, to an eye-witness of the stormy developments of the time, is not only understandable but quite particularly apt.

Indeed, the Moscow which I left in summer 1931 was already noticeably different from the Moscow in which I had arrived a year earlier. I had become familiar with it. I had experienced how history was being made there every day. Lenin's genius had foreseen much but reality surpassed even his bold dreams.

I could see this time and again after 1945 during my visits to the Soviet Union, on trips from Moscow to Lake Baikal and the Amur, where the great Baikal-Amur Railway is being built, from Moscow to the Kama, from Moscow to Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Tashkent or Irkutsk where fundamental changes have taken place and where history is being made every day.



Demonstration of the Young Communist League of Germany
on the 17th International Youth Day in St Ingbert, Saarland, on 6 September 1931:
Gertrud 'x'; and Erich Honecker 'xx), Hans Hoppstädter (xxx).

V

The fight for a united front

At the end of 1978 the Karl Marx Academy of the Central Committee of the SED in Berlin published—for the 60th anniversary of the KPD—a brochure entitled *Kampf um Einheitsfront* (The Fight for a United Front). It contains historical documents relating to the KPD's struggle during the years 1931 and 1934 in the Saarland. This enabled me, after a lapse of nearly five decades, to read once again newspaper articles which I, then a 19-year-old activist of the party and the youth federation, had written in the summer and autumn of 1931, immediately after my return from the Soviet Union, for the Saarbrücken *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the organ of the KPD in the Saarland. There were also reports in which I had been mentioned by name. Thus memories were revived of a time full of struggle, a time as full of storm and stress as the *Sturm und Drang* of my own youthful nature.

During my year's absence the social conditions of the workers in the Saarland as well as in the Reich had taken a catastrophic turn for the worse. The number of unemployed had risen daily from 4.6 million in February 1931 to more than 5.6 million by the end of that year. Rising too was the number of those unemployed who no longer received unemployment benefits but had to live on the meagre hand-outs of "Welfare": according to official statistics there were nearly a million such people by the end of

1931. The number of unemployed in the Saarland had risen steadily since 1928; it jumped from 5.24 per cent at the end of 1930 to 13.11 per cent at the end of 1931. The following year it would again double to reach 30.17 per cent. According to the statistical office of the Saarland every third person of working age was out of work and without any other source of income by the end of 1932. In reality, there were many places where one worker in two was without work.

The unemployed were not the only ones who suffered from the consequences of the capitalist world economic crisis. Short-time work was widespread and reduced the wages of those who had not yet lost their jobs. In addition the bosses used the situation on the labour market to cut wages and salaries rigorously. The North American journalist H. R. Knickerbocker in his book *Will Europe Recover?*, published in 1932, spoke of a "world record of wage cuts". The situation of the middle classes was deteriorating rapidly too. The growing number of bankruptcies gave an idea of the worries artisans and shopkeepers were facing. More and more white-collar workers, even scientists and artists, lost their jobs and experienced a social decline, the real cause of which many of them never understood.

Worst hit by the crisis were young people of working-class background. Many of them were unable to find an apprenticeship or any kind of work when they left school. As long as one member of their families still had a job they received no benefit at all. At best they were employed in emergency work and given their lunch as payment. They were forbidden to engage in any political activity by the Saarland government under a law concerning the formation of associations dating from 1908, Kaiser Wilhelm's era. What were these young people supposed to do with their lives? Unemployed, deprived of rights, without hope and marked by undernourishment, were they not forced to look for an alternative to capitalist misery? Why should it not be possible to win them over to the revolutionary way which the communists were pointing out?

When I returned from the Soviet Union the Central Committee of the KJVD appointed me secretary for agitation and propaganda in the Saarland. A few months later, at the end of 1931, I was promoted to political head of the KJVD district branch. From then on I was also a member of the Secretariat of the KPD district and at the same time district organiser of the Red Youth Front, the youth organisation of the Red Fighting Front. From Saarbrücken's Herbertstrasse (now Dr Mauer Strasse), where apart from the offices of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* there were also the headquarters of the party

and the youth organisation, I travelled a lot around the Saarland and thus gained first-hand personal experience of the squalor of working-class youth.

As early as spring 1931 a special form of workers' demonstration had been revived in Germany: the hunger march. The older generation remembered hunger marches from the last years of the First World War. There were hunger marches in Britain and the USA as well. In April 1931 the KPD had organised a rally of the unemployed in Essen and called for a mass demonstration against material squalor. More than 20,000 unemployed people from the Ruhr area took part in the hunger march through the town with the symbolic name of Essen (which in German has a double meaning: on the one hand it is the plural of *Esse* meaning "factory chimney", and on the other it means "food" or "eating"). A few years later I was to organise underground antifascist resistance in this town, of which I shall have more to say later, including the adventurous action by which we procured the necessary food to celebrate New Year's Eve 1933/34.

In 1931—32 there were hunger marches in all the industrial towns of Germany. Things were not much different in the Saarland. The food situation of the unemployed resembled that during the war years. But in contrast to the situation in the winter of 1916/17 there existed sufficient stocks of food during the hungry winter of 1931/32. Before the eyes of the world, particularly in the USA, coffee was being used as fuel for locomotives, and large quantities of milk were being poured into the sea in order to keep prices up in the face of a "crisis of overproduction". Profit-mania spurred big business rather to destroy surplus foodstuffs than to distribute it among the hungry unemployed.

During this time of material deprivation I was fortunate in being able to go, as and when my political work permitted, to Wiebelskirchen where my home was and where my mother was always able to put something edible on the table. As in previous years, the small garden and the animals we kept behind the house were a boon. We kept chickens, rabbits and pigs which were all "fattened" with the kitchen scraps of our large family. Many an unemployed comrade got his share of the sandwiches which my mother gave me to take to Saarbrücken. We helped each other wherever we could. We were a sworn community battling for a better world. In all this we had the example of the Soviet Union before our eyes.

In countless talks I had to report on my experiences in the land of Lenin. It was no secret that I had stayed for a year in the Soviet Union. I had sent

postcards to many friends and comrades from Moscow, including one to my barber in Wiebelskirchen who years later in 1977 cheerfully recalled it in a talk before the television cameras in the Federal Republic. However, few comrades knew about my attending the International Lenin School. Neither the Gestapo nor the Nazi judges ever found out.

I was only just back from Moscow when I had to write a long article for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* weekend edition of 19/20 July 1931, reporting on the "Action Congress of Working-Class Youth in the Saarland" of 11/12 July. The article, my first since I had attended the International Lenin School, gives even now ■ graphic impression of the nature of the congress and of the political activities of the KJVD at the time. It is inspired by an understanding of the situation of working-class youth and calls for ■ united revolutionary front of the young in the battle against the burden of crisis and fascism.

The beginning of the article states that in the present situation, with the bourgeoisie trying to shift the whole burden of their crisis onto the shoulders of the working classes, "all sections of the working people must close ranks to form a bloc against all exploiters of the people". Stressing the fact that half of the delegates to the congress called by the KJVD belonged to other youth organisations or to none at all, it points out: "There they were, young miners from the pit, the young workers of both sexes from the factories, from the dole queues and from the offices. They spoke the simple language of the exploited; clearly and distinctly they showed their deprivation. Nothing could stop them forming the united revolutionary front, regardless of whether they belonged to the SAJ, the Hitler Youth or organisations of young Christian workers. They all felt the misery in their bodies."

The article said that the congress had shown that it was possible to forge ■ united revolutionary front of all working classes. However, the Young Communists would have to intensify considerably their activities in the factories, particularly among young Christian workers, in order to win over the majority of young workers to the common revolutionary liberation battle, to the popular revolution for the overthrow of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

In the article I also opposed the so-called *Dominalschulen*. These were schools which the French mine administration in the Saarland had created in order to secure the long-term influence of French capital. These schools lured pupils of German nationality with all kinds of privileges such ■ pocket money, free school books, gifts of clothes and Christmas presents with the

intention of shaping them into willing servants of the French mine-owners. I demanded: "Away from these schools. The children must be educated in German schools ... in order to do revolutionary work here..."

In this context the article referred to one of the most important pre-1933 KPD documents: "We are fighting the double yoke of German-French exploitation. The outline programme of the Communist Party for national and social liberation has not yet sufficiently penetrated the masses of young workers." It was important by means of this fundamental statement of the KPD to unmask the nationalism and chauvinism of the campaign slogan "Back to the German fatherland" and oppose it with the slogan "Our task is to fight side by side with the German working class for the people's revolution".

The "Outline Programme for the National and Social Liberation of the German People" had been published in the *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the KPD, on 24 August 1930, on the eve of my 18th birthday. The main reason why I remember this document so vividly is its important political content. Even though it was published on the occasion of the impending Reichstag elections of 14 September it was, as a political document, anything but an exercise in short-term political propaganda. On the contrary, it was ■ long-term declaration of principle on KPD policy. It set the guidelines for the general direction of the party, and its foresight and historic importance were to be proved more and more clearly in years to come.

The programme which had been worked out on instructions from Ernst Thälmann was based on the experiences of Lenin's alliance policy and on Marxist-Leninist principles concerning the national question. The party recalled that since its foundation it had been a determined opponent of the predatory peace of Versailles. It made clear its intention to declare null and void, in case of an election victory, all obligations resulting from the Treaty of Versailles. But in order to liberate the German people it was not enough to throw off the fetters of Versailles: the rule of the country by big business would have to be toppled at the same time.

To that effect the KPD demanded clearly and concisely: nationalisation of big industry, banks and wholesale trade, division of the big estates among land-hungry farmers, establishment of an economic alliance with the Soviet Union, overcoming unemployment by means of work on urgent public projects for which union wages were to be paid, higher wages, comprehensive social insurance, fair taxation, elimination of inflationary customs duties, reduction of rates for gas, water, electricity and public trans-

port, measures to relieve the housing shortage and, not least, equality of rights for women and young persons.

This programme showed the way to a more understanding relationship between Communists and Social Democratic and Christian workers, and towards an alliance policy embracing farmers and the middle class and the creation of a united antifascist front of all opponents of Hitler. In the elections of 14 September 1930 the KPD thus won 1.33 million more votes than in 1928. The SPD remained the strongest party even though it lost nearly 600,000 votes. However, the Nazis succeeded in increasing their vote from 2.6 per cent in 1928 to 18.3 per cent in 1930. With their chauvinist hysteria the Nazi party outdid all the other reactionary bourgeois parties and took voters away from them. This proved how right the principles of national and social liberation laid down in the KPD programme were.

I myself had studied the programme thoroughly at the Moscow Lenin School. After returning to the Saarland I made it the main guideline of my political work amongst proletarian youths. It determined the content not only of the action congress of working-class youth in the Saarland in July 1931 but also of our rallies and demonstrations, for instance the International Youth Day in September 1931.

It was a turbulent Sunday, that 6 September 1931. I remember it as vividly as if it had been yesterday. Thanks to good political and organisational preparation we managed to dupe a force of at least 200 gendarmes. In August we had already promoted the International Youth Day strongly in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Publicly we announced demonstrations at Neunkirchen and Saarlouis, but secretly we prepared a march through St Ingbert after the police had banned all youth rallies. We invited all Socialist Workers' Youth members and young Christian workers to our rallies. On that Sunday morning we first lured the gendarmes to Neunkirchen but then, after only a few small rallies, made our way by the shortest route, along country lanes, to St Ingbert less than five miles away and had, undisturbed, a big demonstration in the streets of the little town (the photograph preceding this chapter was taken on this occasion).

This was reported on the front page of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* of 8 September under the headline "On the 17th International Youth Day freedom battalions march at Neunkirchen, Saarlouis and St Ingbert in defiance of the ban" as follows: "Despite the deployment of 200 gendarmes at Neunkirchen 200 young people marched through the working-class districts of Neunkirchen. In two places Young Communists addressed those gathered. After one and

a quarter hours of demonstrations the group dispersed. The arriving myrmidons of the law had to withdraw without having achieved their purpose. They vented their rage at this failure on the children. To the surprise of the police the young people of St Ingbert marched through the streets there and held a rally. Police detachments called in from Neunkirchen, Homburg and the surrounding area arrived too late."

During the rally at Saarlouis, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reported, a member of the Socialist Workers' Youth had spoken and declared he was changing over to the KJVD. Amid stormy applause from the participants in the rally three more members followed him. No doubt, the heavy police attacks which, though injuring many children and young people, did not succeed in dispersing the rally, played a part in this.

Bourgeois and social democratic historians nowadays are in the habit of accusing the KPD of having used the wrong tactics in trying to create a united front "from below", an approach which had proved disastrous. Instead the Communists should have tried to create a united front "from above". Such belated counsel may sound quite clever in academic dissertations. But for those who consciously experienced the conflict of the time such accusations are unhistorical and unrealistic. Of course, the Communists would have preferred the theoretically easier "united front from above" to the more laborious "united front from below", had it been possible. As if in their political work they thought in terms of such undialectical, schematic false alternatives as the above-mentioned historians, of "either from above or from below". In reality we wanted the one as much as the other. Regrettably, the pathologically anti-communist attitude of influential leaders of the Social Democrats and the unions set narrow limits to our wishes.

Furthermore, unlike the position in the Reich, it was not the SPD who had the majority of votes in the Saarland but the Centre party. It was therefore important to promote the united proletarian front above all among Christian workers. We left ideological questions deliberately in the background in order to find a common political denominator. We had friendly discussions not only with young Christians but also with priests of both denominations. Later, after Hitler's seizure of power in the Reich, reliable antifascist action groups developed from some of these contacts.

Similarly, we would have been prepared to talk to the Roman Catholic bishops, even to the Pope himself, about the united antifascist front—theoretically that is; because practically it was impossible and hopeless. Pope Pius XI had on 15 May 1931 issued the encyclical *Quadregesimo anno* in

which it was the Communists, not the fascists, who were condemned and execrated in violent terms.

For a long time the right-wing leaders of the SPD and the unions took more or less the same attitude to the Communists. Only on 30 June 1934, one and a half years after the Nazi seizure of power in the Reich, and in the face of the Nazi danger which threatened the Saarland, did the historically important joint rally of the KPD and the SPD at Burbach/Saar take place, at which the leading Saarland representatives of both parties at last openly announced that they had joined forces against fascism.

Until then the SPD leaders had publicly refused or ignored offers by the KPD to form a united front. The right-wing leaders, compromised by their betrayal of August 1914 and by their co-responsibility for the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in January 1919, had always maligned the Soviet state and the Communists. The Communists had no choice but to seek cooperation with Social Democratic class comrades in factories, residential areas and in the dole queues. This approach was correct and necessary. Unity of action, the united antifascist front, was in the interest of the workers and all the working people.

The Communists' patient struggle was appreciated by the working population of the Saarland. They trusted the KPD in increasing measure. During the district council elections on 16 February 1932 the KPD gained almost twice as many votes as in 1928 (84,112 as against 46,541). The Saarland SPD lost almost 7,500 votes. For the first time the KPD was the strongest workers' party in the Saarland.

As mentioned already, Luitwin Bies in his book *Klassenkampf an der Saar 1919—1935* has acknowledged the contribution made by the KJVD to the election success of the KPD on 16 February 1932: The persistent youth policy of the KPD, counting on the growing organisation of the KJVD, had contributed to its success. Luitwin Bies also refers to my activities and mentions a contribution I made to the brochure "The Road to Freedom", published in Saarbrücken in 1931 by the Saarland KPD, in which the development of a broad-based united front movement against fascism and wage-robbery was described as the "demand of the hour".

On the basis of the outline programme published in the *Rote Fahne* on 24 August 1930, the Saar district leadership of the KPD one year later had worked out an "Outline programme for the national and social liberation of the German people of the Saarland" which was published in Saarbrücken's *Arbeiter-Zeitung* on 20/21 September 1931 and in which I had a hand

in drawing up. In order to point out some of the special features of the class struggle in the Saarland, I should like to quote some of its passages:

"In the Saarland Röchling and Otto Wolff (Stumm) cooperate closely with Schneider-Creusot and de Wendel, German big business with French big business, in order to intensify exploitation and to maintain their rotting economy at the expense of the working masses. In view of this development the Saarland district committee of the KPD declares, on the basis of the programme of the Central Committee of the KPD on the national and social liberation of the German people, the following: Only the Communist Party really fights against the Versailles robbers' treaty, the starting point of German-French exploitation of the Saarland proletariat."

Following the demand that the Saarland be returned to Germany it is explained: "The national and social liberation of the working people of the Saarland cannot be achieved by means of the lying demagogical catchphrases of the National Socialists ... but only in pitched battle side by side with the whole revolutionary German proletariat against our own and foreign exploiters and oppressors until capitalism is toppled and a Soviet Germany created." There follows an acknowledgement of the heroic efforts of the Soviet peoples in their socialist development whose successes are ■ source of support to the KPD.

Our comrades of the French working class are assured of solidarity: "The French proletariat too suffers from capitalist exploitation and oppression. Under the leadership of the French Communist Party it is preparing to topple the ruling exploiters and to establish Soviet power in France."

About its aims the KPD says: "The victorious German and Saarland proletariat will expropriate without compensation the Saarland mines owned by the French state as well as the iron and steel works and factories of German entrepreneurs and those dominated by international shareholders and place them in the hands of their rightful owners, the working masses ... By introducing the seven-hour working day and the five-day working week, by increasing production to satisfy all needs, we shall eliminate unemployment. We shall increase wages by cutting out entrepreneurs' profits and the unproductive cost of the capitalist mode of production, and by immediately stopping payment of contributions and interest resulting from predatory treaties ■■ well ■■ reparation payments."

On the basis of this clear-cut declaration I had worked out an action programme for the working youth of the Saarland which was published in the brochure "The Road to Freedom" and which Luitwin Bies has again after

a lapse of many years made accessible to a broader readership in the documentary appendix to his book. A remarkable feature of this action programme for the young are the nine concrete demands emanating from day-to-day problems, such as ■ the six-hour working day for adolescents, equal pay for equal work, unemployment benefits for the young, reduction of the voting age to 18 years, and repeal of reactionary laws banning or inhibiting political activity by the young.

The documents of the KPD and the KJVD were greeted with enthusiasm at the "First Freedom Congress against National and Social Oppression in the Saarland" on 15 November 1931 at the Saarbrücken assembly hall. The congress welcomed working people from the land of Lenin on the 14th anniversary of the victorious Red October and declared socialist development in the Soviet Union to be a shining example of how liberation of the working people is achieved.

There was no doubt about the nature of Hitler's fascism at the freedom congress. It is true that at the time the Nazi party did not count in the Saarland; the established voting population of the KPD and the Centre party did not give the Hitler party a chance. But we were, naturally, aware of the dangers emanating from this "National Socialist Movement" in the Reich. It was therefore said in the programme of the Saarland KPD that the bourgeoisie had created for itself, beside its traditional parties and organisations, "new nationalistic murder organisations"; in Germany the "National Socialist German Workers' Party" (NSDAP) was playing this role by trying to fetter radicalised working people to capitalist monopolies using demagogical national and social catchphrases. The Saarland KPD predicted that the "Third Reich" of the fascists would be "worse than the present squalor".

Some bourgeois authors try nowadays to give the impression that the Communists did not realise the nature and danger of Hitler's fascism until the 7th World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow which lasted from 25 July to 20 August 1935. This is ■ historical lie. As early as 20 June 1923, Clara Zetkin had spoken before a plenary session of the extended Comintern Executive Committee and declared, drawing on the experience of fascism in Italy: "In fascism the proletariat faces an extraordinarily dangerous and terrible enemy. Fascism is the strongest, most concentrated, the most classical expression of the general attack mounted by the world bourgeoisie at this moment. To bring it down is an elementary necessity."

Everybody can read in Thälmann's biography how the Chairman of the

KPD in all these years before 1933 had branded fascism as the deadly enemy of the workers' movement and of the Soviet Union, and how he had warned against the danger of war emanating from it—up to the famous campaign slogan in the presidential elections of early 1932: "Whoever votes for Hindenburg votes for Hitler; whoever votes for Hitler votes for war." History has tragically confirmed how true these warnings were.

On 10 November 1931 the Central Committee of the KPD passed a resolution in which Communists were strongly warned against letting themselves be provoked to acts of individual terror by the increasing murderous terror of the Nazis. The only correct answer to the perfidious and unscrupulous terror methods of the Nazis was further development of the antifascist mass struggle. The Central Committee emphasised that individual terror was incompatible with communism, and that such tendencies were in stark contradiction to the very foundations on which Marx and Engels had built the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary workers' movement. It added that such tendencies were also in contradiction to the programme of the Communist International.

The resolution was published in the Saarbrücken *Arbeiter-Zeitung* on 15/16 November 1931 together with an editorial which was largely from my pen.

"The armed assaults and acts of murder," it says, "the innumerable crimes of the National Socialists, can produce thoughts of individual revenge and individual terror. However, he who lets himself be carried away by feelings and moods is no communist." And further: "Individual shoot-outs are no answer to fascist attacks, but only mass struggle, organised defense, real self-defense by the masses on the basis of the united proletarian front."

I mention this clear statement of the KPD's position because bourgeois and social democratic historians claim to this day that the Weimar Republic was wrecked by the "terror from the left and from the right". That is the way things were already being presented at the time in bourgeois and social-reformist newspapers. Not without reason had we pointed out in our editorial that individual terror on the part of Communists would only serve the reactionaries and would give them a welcome excuse to intensify anti-communist instigation to murder.

No, Communists neither invented nor practised terrorism. Rather had they been—since 1919, since the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and their comrades-in-arms—the targets of permanent terror "from the right", terror by the Noske troops, the counter-revolutionary

Freikorps, the Reichswehr, and the police which for a long time were controlled by Social Democrats, and finally and above all by the Nazis.

The Red Fighting Front, which in the Reich had been banned on the initiative of Reich Interior Minister Karl Severing (SPD), was able to work almost legally in the Saarland until 1935. Its members were trained in disciplined behaviour and paramilitary sports activities. They acted as stewards during indoor gatherings and outdoor demonstrations as well as couriers whenever disciplined execution of orders was essential. Never in my experience—not even during our secondments in the election campaigns of 1928 and 1932 in the Reich—did Hitler's Storm Troop gangs (SA), paid and equipped from donations by the armament industry to the tune of millions of marks, ever dare to attack a disciplined Red Fighting Front unit. The brown-shirted SA thugs, like all mercenaries, were cowards by nature. Only in the form of ambushes or when they outnumbered their opponents or had support from the police did they launch their terrorist attacks.

On 14 and 15 November 1932, I took part in a meeting of the Central Committee of the KJVD in Prieros near Berlin. It was the last time that I saw our unforgettable Ernst Thälmann, the first and last time that I was able to talk to him personally.

First Fritz Grosse, the new Chairman of the KJVD, reported on the situation and on the struggle of the German youth. Then representatives of virtually all districts spoke. On the second day I had an opportunity to report the experiences of the KJVD organisation in the Saarland in the struggle for a united antifascist youth front. I also mentioned our close cooperation with the French comrades and promised that we would block the road to the Saarland for the fascists.

Then Ernst Thälmann spoke. We had given him a cordial welcome in front of the house when he climbed out of the sidecar of a motor cycle. Now he stood before us. He gave us valuable advice on the methods to use in our political work. He exhorted us to keep learning, to acquire theoretical knowledge and to search for forms of leadership most suitable to the young. He advised us to speak the language of youth, to foster revolutionary romanticism, to encourage a comradely relationship amongst the young and not to forget the young farmers, the school and university students. In view of the irrational and mystical Nazi propaganda which appealed to all the wrong sentiments, the KJVD would have to put across the correct political line of approach of the Communists by using psychological methods as well.

I have never forgotten Ernst Thälmann's last sentence, not during all the long night of fascism, not even while I was in prison. I had no idea then that I should never see Ernst Thälmann again. And he could have no idea what exactly the next few months had in store. He said: "Not only you young ones but also we old ones shall live to see the victory of socialism in Germany." When Ernst Thälmann was murdered in the Buchenwald concentration camp on 18 August 1944 he knew that the Red Army would finally destroy Hitler's fascism and thus give socialism a new chance in Germany.



The Althof store in the
Limbecker Platz, Essen,
scene of the antifascist
leaflet campaign
in early 1934.



Portrait taken in 1935.

VI

Illegal activity in the Ruhr

It happened on Friday, 10 February 1933, at about 6 p.m.: the gas-holder at Neunkirchen, the largest in Germany, blew up. The thunder of the enormous explosion was heard thirteen miles away at Saarbrücken where I happened to be at the time. Immediately after the catastrophe Neunkirchen was sealed off. But the news of the great disaster spread like wildfire. There were over ■ hundred dead. More than a thousand were injured, some of them critically. The workers' dwellings in Saarbrücker Strasse near the Neunkirchen iron works, previously the property of the Stumm brothers, were completely destroyed. Tram cars full of passengers were blown into the air. A cinema collapsed, burying patrons in rubble. After the explosion of the iron works' gasometer, which had been built in 1931, the fuel tanks of the factory were in danger of blowing up too.

The exact cause of the accident was never established. Presumably a technical fault had caused the devastating damage. Ironically, the Neunkirchen disaster struck just at the moment when in Berlin the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, who had been installed as Chancellor of the Reich on 30 January 1933, was preparing to deliver his first big speech to be broadcast nationwide. In their weekend editions of 11/12 February 1933 the Nazi newspapers came out with headlines like this: "The Führer's great speech

at the Sports Palace—Sharp challenge to Marxism—Catastrophic explosion at Neunkirchen.” If one nowadays considers, in retrospect, the coincidence of Hitler’s “challenge to Marxism”, heard on the air by some 20 million people, with the Neunkirchen explosion, then the enormous jet of flame which shot up from the gasometer of the Neunkirchen iron works may appear as a historic warning similar to the fiery words which appeared on the wall during Belshazzar’s famous feast and foretold a terrible end. As an adherent of dialectical and historical materialism I have no regard for “ghost writing” and secret warning signs portending misfortune. But I would like to say objectively that 12 years later, at the end of the Second World War, countless streets between Stalingrad and London looked very similar to the Saarbrücker Strasse at Neunkirchen in February 1933, and that Hitler’s “sharp challenge to Marxism” in the end cost the lives of some 50 million people.

There was hardly any need at the beginning of February 1933 for writing on the wall to foresee the catastrophic consequences of Hitler’s seizure of power for the other nations of Europe and for world peace. Anyone who in the winter of 1932/33 made a sober political assessment of the facts could see where the anti-communist, nationalistic hysteria of Hitler’s clique—which was financed by the most aggressive groups amongst German big business and the big estate owners—would lead: to the chaos of the Second World War. Ernst Thälmann had said it often and unmistakably enough: “Whoever votes for Hitler votes for war.”

As early as the summer of 1932, and during the Reichstag elections on 31 July, the Nazi party could no longer show any significant gains in votes. In the Reichstag elections of 6 November 1932 it lost two million, while the KPD increased its poll by 600,000 votes. Combined, the votes for the KPD and SPD clearly outnumbered the votes for Hitler’s party. In the local elections of 13 November and 4 December the advance of the KPD and the loss of support for the Nazis continued. The barometer of public opinion had changed. Certain petty bourgeois circles began to turn their backs on the “National Socialist Movement”. This made Hitler’s backers increase their activities all the more.

Millions of Reichsmarks in bribes (according to incomplete counts more than 700 million Reichsmarks between 1932 and early 1945) went to the Nazi party. At the Nuremberg trials the banker Kurt Freiherr von Schröder admitted: “When on 6 November 1932 the NSDAP suffered its first setback and thus had passed its peak, support from German industry became a

matter of urgency.” Contrary to the will of the electorate a group of economically powerful industrialists, bankers and *Junkers* petitioned Reich President Paul von Hindenburg on 19 November 1932 that Hitler be appointed Reich Chancellor. A study commissioned by the Reichswehr supported this demand. On 4 January 1933, Hitler and Franz von Papen met at the Cologne house of von Schröder to hatch the plot which would bring the Nazis to power. On 30 January 1933 Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor of the German Reich.

The declared programme of the Hitler party and its policy to date left no doubt that this party was not only in the pay of the most aggressive armament magnates but also intended to realise their class interests unscrupulously. Despite all the national and social demagoguery, exercised with unparalleled intensity, unscrupulousness and deceit, it was nevertheless clearly recognisable that this “workers’ party” represented neither the national nor the social interests of the working population, but had two main aims: the dictatorial elimination of the Marxist workers’ movement and expansion by means of war to “win new living space” for German imperialism.

The dictatorial and aggressive intentions of the German fascists had been announced unmistakably in Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* which had been reprinted several times since 1925 and was thus accessible to the public. Nevertheless, at home as well as abroad, there were political forces which either supported Hitler’s fascism directly or furthered it indirectly by a policy of tolerance and appeasement. Without approval by certain circles in American high finance, for instance, the German bankers who were heavily indebted to the USA could hardly have raised Hitler to power. Indeed, in October 1931 the German industrialist Carl Friedrich von Siemens had praised the Nazi party as a “bulwark against communism” in a speech to American industrialists in New York. Many bourgeois and Social Democratic politicians in Germany who later became victims of Nazism as well as a number of bourgeois governments whose countries later became victims of fascist aggression supported or tolerated Hitler’s fascism then because it was anti-communist and anti-Soviet in the extreme.

History proves that Ernst Thälmann’s party was the only German party which opposed Hitler’s government immediately and uncompromisingly. On 30 January itself, the KPD called for a political general strike against the cabinet of big business and the militarists, which it described as an “overt fascist dictatorship” and as “the most brutal, unconcealed declaration of

war on the working population, on the German working class". On the same day the Central Committee of the KPD proposed to the party leadership of the SPD that they declare ■ joint general strike against Hitler as had been done successfully in March 1920 for the protection of the republic against the Kapp Putsch. But the party leadership of the SPD turned the proposal down and declared on 31 January 1933 that the Hitler government had come to power "constitutionally"; the SPD would fight "on constitutional ground" and would undertake extra-parliamentary actions only if Hitler violated the Constitution.

During those trying hours and days we in Saarbrücken waited feverishly for every piece of news from the Reich. Every news flash on protest rallies, protest actions and protest strikes awakened new hope. Every bit of information on the refusal by right-wing SPD and union leaders to join forces with the Communists in the fight against Hitler caused depression. And all the news reports on Nazi acts of violence against Communists and honest Social Democrats, which came in more and more frequently, caused anger and indignation. With heavy hearts we were compelled to look on from beyond the Reich's borders as the combined power apparatus of the SA, police and Reichswehr fell first and foremost on the Communists with unparalleled brutality, occupying their offices, demolishing their homes and threatening their lives. In the end Hitler's war of annihilation destroyed half of Europe and led to Auschwitz and Maidanek—but it started in 1933 with the murderous persecution of the German Communists.

On 2 February 1933, when it had become clear that the leadership of the SPD would not agree to a general strike against Hitler, the Nazi rulers dared to take the step of occupying the Karl Liebknecht House in Berlin. On 4 February a presidential directive for the "protection of the German people" was issued which made all criticism of the Nazi government a punishable offence, created a "legal" basis for the persecution of Communist activists and practically made the KPD illegal. But the Communists fought back. On 7 February a clandestine meeting of the Central Committee and its district activists took place at which Ernst Thälmann reiterated the policy of the united antifascist front and ordered measures to protect the party and to continue its fight underground.

As the desire for ■ united antifascist front grew day by day among Social Democratic workers and activists, and as in the circumstances the Nazis were facing ■ decisive defeat in the forthcoming Reichstag election on 5 March they chose the provocation of the Reichstag Fire which took place

on the evening of 27 February. Based on the absurd claim that the Communists had set the Reichstag on fire, the infamous emergency directive "For the protection of people and state" was issued on the next day, which practically suspended all the civil rights and liberties laid down in the Weimar Constitution and created a "legal" basis for the state's terror campaign against all antifascists. Warrants for the arrest of the leading KPD activists were issued. Nazi gangs now occupied the editorial offices of the Social Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts*. On 3 March Ernst Thälmann, victim of an informer, was arrested in his secret refuge. Yet on 5 March five million Germans voted for the KPD whose mandates were, however, immediately declared void, in breach of the Weimar Constitution.

In view of all these facts, who dares to claim still that Hitler came to power legally?

From the end of February 1933 we in the Saarland learned from our comrades who had crossed over illegally from the Reich more and more gruesome details of the terror campaign to which the German workers' movement was exposed. We had not expected anything good from the Nazis and feared the worst. But what we learned now, about arrests, torture, concentration camps, murder and manslaughter, intimidation, extortion and people being spied on, and about the brutal treatment of women and children, was so monstrous in its extent and systematic cynicism that it could not have been foreseen or even imagined in one's worst dreams.

Since then there has been much philosophising as to why in the "nation of poets and thinkers" such gross contempt for human values and the mass murder of human beings were possible.

Most elements of the Nazi terror had, however, existed before: the lynching of human beings for their skin colour in the USA, pogroms against Jews in Tsarist Russia, concentration camps for the Boers in British-occupied South Africa, the infamous "shot dead while attempting to escape" phrase used to cover up counter-revolutionary murder in post-war Germany, mass murder in most imperialist colonies as well as torture, deportation and judicial murder during the persecution of Communists and Socialists in practically all capitalist countries. In Russia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and China the reactionaries had answered revolutionary developments with counter-revolutionary massacres.

What was new in Nazi Germany was that Hitler's fascism used all these forms of ideological terror and extermination of human beings with absolute ruthlessness, increasing technical perfection and "German thoroughness".

In the process the mass media of the whole country (including the new media of radio and sound film), after having been *gleichgeschaltet* (brought into line) were openly employed in the anti-communist murder campaign.

Of the roughly 360,000 members which the KPD counted in December 1932 at least 18,000 were imprisoned and bestially tortured during the first six weeks of the Nazi regime. Tens of thousands were sent to concentration camps. The Dachau camp alone, established in March 1933, was packed with 5,000 antifascists. According to incomplete data from the Red Aid organisation about 5,000 antifascists, mostly Communists, were murdered before mid-1935, while 21,000 were sent for trial, and 19,000 were given either death sentences or long prison terms. The number of executions for political reasons registered by the Reich Ministry of Justice rose from 86 in 1937 to 5,764 in 1944.

The antifascist resistance was not to be broken because the Communists, soul and backbone of the resistance, never gave up but remained faithful to their cause in the face of terror and death. We in the Saarland also intensified our antifascist struggle. On 1 May, when Hitler was preparing his big blow against the unions, I organised a big demonstration in Saarbrücken. Despite the authorities' ban on all public gatherings the working-class youth under the leadership of the KJVD took to the streets. The Socialist Workers' Youth under its district chairman Ernst Braun—who later took part in the Spanish people's fight for freedom and now lives in Gera in the German Democratic Republic—was present at these demonstrations as well. The united antifascist front was beginning to take shape.

During the spring and early summer of 1933 I crossed over several times into the "Third Reich", as the Nazis in their historical megalomania used to call their state, to attend illegal meetings of leading KJVD members at Mannheim, Mainz, Frankfurt-am-Main and other places. We compared notes on the antifascist struggle and discussed measures to support the illegal work of the KJVD in Hitler's Germany. In May 1933 Comrade Willi Rom from Frankfurt-am-Main came to the Saarland and took over the function of chief of organisation (in effect, second secretary) in the KJVD district leadership to give me, the political chief (first secretary) more time for the growing task of illegal work. Willi Rom, who now lives in the German Democratic Republic at Berlin-Marzahn, was present at many discussions with the Socialist Workers' Youth leadership and with leading representatives of the Catholic Youth Federation of the Saarland.

In the summer of 1933 certain political connections had developed be-

tween the KJVD, the Catholic Youth Federation and the Socialist Workers' Youth, Young Friends of Nature and Evangelical youth groups in several small localities of the Saarland, such as Wiebelskirchen, Neunkirchen, Sulzbach, and elsewhere. We went on outings together which we used for political talks on antifascist resistance. Official arrangements and jointly organised actions were difficult to achieve because some representatives of the Catholic Youth Federation for instance thought that an open alliance with the Communists would make the work in their organisations difficult.

The European Antifascist Workers' Congress held in Paris between 4 and 6 June 1933 was a great encouragement for our struggle. I still remember that we, the small delegation of young workers from the Saarland which I led, drove to Paris in an old Mercedes because this seemed cheaper and safer than travel by rail. It also gave us an opportunity to see something of the French capital during congress recesses, and I was very impressed by it. I must have been in Paris at least three times during those years though each time only for a short stay: for the congress in June 1933, for the World Youth Congress against War and Fascism from 22 to 25 September 1933, and finally in early March 1935 after I had had to leave the Saarland for good. If I am not mistaken it was in June 1933 that we visited some of the sights of Paris, amongst them the *Mur des Fédérés* where in 1871 the fiery idealists of the Paris Commune had been shot, and the woods of Compiègne where in 1918 the ceasefire had been "agreed" in a railway carriage. Seven years later, on 22 June 1940, the Nazis were to have their revenge when they dictated humiliating ceasefire terms to France in the selfsame carriage.

The two congresses in Paris were important in so far as they contributed to the mobilisation of the international public against the dangers of war posed by Hitlerism. Such renowned men as Henri Barbusse, André Gide and Romain Rolland took part in the organisation of the congress. During the June congress I spoke as the representative of German youth and recalled Ernst Thälmann's warning: "Whoever votes for Hitler votes for war." Six years later this war had become a grim reality. In 1933 the congresses helped to enhance international solidarity with the victims of fascism. During the September congress a seat in the first row had been reserved and decorated with flowers in honour of the 20-year-old Hamburg worker and KJVD member Bruno Tesch who had been executed by decapitation on 1 August 1933, one of the first young victims of the Nazi rule of terror.

In summer 1933 it was my responsibility besides my youth work in the Saarland to maintain illegal contacts with the KJVD branches in the districts of Mannheim and Frankfurt-am-Main, and to take part in preparations for an extended session of the Central Committee planned for August 1933 in Amsterdam. In Mannheim I met Heinz Hoffmann, a mechanic and an active Young Communist who later took part in the liberation struggle of the Spanish people; today he is a member of the SED Central Committee's Politbureau, a four-star general and Minister for National Defence of the German Democratic Republic. There was also "Kutschi", or Kurt Müller, who worked in the West German KPD after the war and is now a member of the SPD. In 1933 he was to prove himself in southwest Germany because in the struggle for a united antifascist front he had been "against the official line". I also met Wilhelm Florin who at one stage had talked of the "bankrupt SPD", an attitude which had been of no help in the struggle for unity of action.

Fritz Grosse, whom I knew personally since the gathering of November 1932 at Prieros, has since graphically described the circumstances in which the meeting of the KJVD Central Committee in Amsterdam in early August 1933 took place. In fact, the meeting was held on a fairly large motorboat on which we travelled like package tourists through the Amsterdam canals and out into the North Sea Canal in order to be safe from eavesdroppers. Among the subjects discussed was cooperation with the Catholic youth, an issue on which I could speak from experience. It was decided that I should take up illegal work in the Ruhr area as soon as possible as representative of the KJVD Central Committee and political chief of the youth federation.

The leadership of the KJVD in Essen had been arrested in summer 1933. There was practically no district leadership left. The KJVD was going through a similar experience to that of the party: by early June 1933, 17 out of 22 KJVD district committees had had nearly all their members arrested. But the organisation of the party survived because new stalwarts kept emerging who held the comrades together. In Essen, as in the whole Ruhr area, there were many politically active clandestine groups of Young Communists despite all the persecution. One of them was led by Albert Weichert who had been responsible within the KJVD Ruhr district for running the agitation and propaganda groups (agitprop groups, comparable to today's political song groups) as early as 1930. I made contact with him in August 1933. I had to say a password and show one half of a particular

cigarette card. My cover name was Herbert Jung, though I still had to travel on my identity card from the Saarland which had my correct name on it.

Essen was then a real factory town with pithead rigs and blast furnaces, and resembled my hometown of Neunkirchen, only it was much bigger, having about 650,000 inhabitants. The novel *Sturm auf Essen* (Assault on Essen) by Hans Marchwitza, published in 1930 and banned in 1931, is largely authentic and gives a lively picture of the town which was darkened by steam and smoke during the day and lit up at night by the fires of the always noisy industrial works. To me Essen was not Krupp's town, but the town of the fighting working class.

Albert Weichert was able to get me safe quarters in the western district of Essen in an allotment hut. Then we sat down together and took stock of the illegal work. After two or three days I had a good idea what forces were active or could be activated and how best to employ them. We laid down the political line and the organisational principles. Then we started the practical work.

In the memoirs of Albert Weichert we read: "To begin with, the principle of large groups had to be discarded. We formed groups of five, later of three. This proved very useful for clandestine work. It was for this reason that the Gestapo in 1933/34 could not arrest any members of the clandestine youth federation. We changed our mode of operation under Erich Honecker's leadership in such a way that we could say we had attained a fair degree of security."

Albert Weichert considers it particularly important "that Erich Honecker arrived with the new political line: away from sectarian thinking and towards concentration of all antifascist forces". In this respect the Ruhr area offered vast possibilities some of which had not been made use of. In order to mobilise these forces the KJVD had to be strengthened politically and organisationally.

In September and October 1933 we clandestinely reconstructed the KJVD in all districts of Essen. We had good connections with the underground organisation of the KPD. For the production of our own leaflets we had a duplicator at our disposal which was installed in the flat of a young comrade in the Burghardtstrasse in Essen-West. At that time I wrote the texts for many leaflets, usually during the night. We even succeeded in publishing a duplicated edition of the *Junge Ruhrgarde* (Young Guard of the Ruhr). Willi Rom, who arrived from the Saarland around October to assist me in the organisation of the KJVD district leadership, played an important part

in this. Otto Wiesner was helpful too. He was the head of the Young Red Pioneers of the Ruhr area and representative of the district committee of the KJVD. Otto Wiesner, who now lives in the German Democratic Republic, had procured a typewriter and a duplicator and installed it in the boiler room of the Catholic Hospital at Oberhausen. There we could also produce leaflets and hand-outs.

With the help of comrades in Rhein-Ruhr shipping we received illegally many leaflets, newspapers and brochures from Holland. The famous "Brown Book on the Reichstag Fire and Hitler's Terror" of summer 1933, and other informative literature on the Reichstag Fire Trial which had opened at Leipzig on 21 September 1933, were received as camouflage literature with harmless covers. I remember a brochure made up as a "Mondamin* Cookbook" which on the inside had information on the murder of our comrade John Schehr on 1 February 1934 at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin's Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. Salesmen of the Mondamin company who travelled all over the country warned against the bogus brochure, which drew even more people's attention to it. Even though in our illegal situation we were always in great danger we were not discouraged. Wherever possible we exposed the enemy to ridicule. I learned of such an example at the Dortmund sports stadium in summer 1933. It was then an open secret that the chief of staff of the SA, Ernst Röhm, as well as several other high-ranking SA leaders, had homosexual inclinations. During the night before a big SA parade planned in Dortmund where Captain Röhm wanted to take the march-past, young people from the KJVD painted in big lettering all along the stadium wall the slogan: "Attention SA: Pants down, Röhm is coming!"

A year later, on 30 June 1934, during the gruesome Röhm massacre, the SA chief and about 1,000 other people from the inner circle of the Nazi leadership were to be assassinated by their own political friends. In this violent "solution" of some internal contradictions in the Nazi party even the secretary of Vice-Chancellor von Papen was murdered. Von Papen himself who had arrogantly come to the Saarland for the funeral of the victims of the Neunkirchen explosion and had brazenly spoken out in favour of Hitler's cause, lost his post and was packed off abroad as an ambassador. The Röhm massacre served to consolidate the Nazi system at a time when it was far from being as solidly established as is often assumed nowadays.

*A patent baking powder

As late as 1934 the SPD and KPD still represented a power in the Ruhr area. In one single street, the Rheinische Strasse in Dortmund, more than 2,000 voted "No" on 12 November 1933. Hitler had combined the Reichstag "elections" with a referendum on Germany's leaving the League of Nations. Everyone who went to the polling stations was given a "Yes" pin. This was meant to put psychological pressure on the "voters". Nevertheless, more than two million Germans did not go to the referendum, and more than three million voted "No".

I still remember this because I was present at the count in several Dortmund polling stations. Quarters were provided on that day by young comrades from the KJVD subdistrict branch at Dortmund. Ernst Wabra was amongst them, the man from the Central Committee of the KJVD responsible for the Mittelrhein, Niederrhein and Ruhr districts. My neighbour was the brave young Communist Berta Karg who now lives in the Federal Republic of Germany and who did valuable political work in the Niederrhein district until her arrest early in 1934. Rola, as Berta Karg was usually called, had expanded the united front against Hitler to include the Catholic youth. In Düsseldorf's St Anne monastery she had spoken to forty or fifty members of the "Catholic Storm Groups" through the offices of chaplain Dr Joseph Rossaint in order to win them over to joint action against Nazism.

Up to the end of January 1934, Berta Karg, who had come to clandestine work from the Moscow Lenin School, maintained contact with Rossaint and Franz Steber. Steber was then the Reich leader of the Catholic Storm Groups which up to 1936 had still about 40,000 members and whose headquarters were at the Düsseldorf Youth House. This had been closed by the Nazis immediately after they seized power, had to be given back after the Concordat between the Vatican and the Hitler government was signed on 20 July 1933, only to be finally closed down in connection with the Law on the Hitler Youth of 1 December 1936, under which all other youth organisations were banned.

Rossaint and Steber as well as their girls and boys were splendid people. They fought bravely against Nazism even after a priest's cassock was no longer a protection against persecution. In January 1936 Rossaint and Steber, together with more than 60 other Catholic youth activists, were arrested and in April 1937 they were sent for trial before the "People's Court". Rossaint received an eleven-year and Steber a five-year prison sentence. I learned about this at Brandenburg-Görden from Fritz Grosse,

who knew Rossaint personally and who had been sentenced to life imprisonment in March 1936.

After 1945, Dr Joseph Rossaint became a founder member of the Free German Youth in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Today, despite his old age, he was born in 1902, he is active as chairman of the Association of Victims of Nazism in the Federal Republic, where Franz Steber also lives.

During 1933/34, willingness to cooperate with the KJVD increased among Social Democratic and Christian youth. We had outings together. KJVD members took part in meetings of the Christian youth federations, above all of the Catholic Youth Federation. Articles by Communists were published in such Church publications as were still permitted. There was even a joint campaign to distribute leaflets.

Albert Weichert maintained contact with the Essen Friends of Nature who on many nights pushed leaflets, journals and camouflage literature into the letter boxes of carefully selected houses. Strict security rules, for instance the instruction to wear gloves during such work, had to be observed. Willi Rom for his part made contact with additional Church circles, for instance with a chaplain at Gelsenkirchen with whose help a conference of representatives of the KJVD and the Federation was organised, in which I took part despite the clandestine nature of my work which forbade contact with larger groups of people.

At the end of 1933, in spite of the wintry weather, I stayed for a while in the hut of a comrade in the "Sunshine" allotment gardens at Essen-Haarzopf, a large area on the southwestern edge of town. There I could meet, after dark, comrades from all parts of the Ruhr area without being found out. And there we celebrated New Year's Eve together with a few young comrades who were also living as outlaws. Despite all the harsh experiences of 1933 and the uncertainties of 1934, it was a happy celebration which I like to look back on. At New Year's Eve celebrations since 1945, I have certainly talked as much about this one as I did about that of 1930/31 in Moscow with Max Hoelz who was no longer alive at the end of 1933. He had died in an accident in the Soviet Union on 15 September 1933.

Albert Weichert had contributed substantially to the success of the happy little celebration of New Year 1934 with a bold idea. He succeeded in getting temporary driver's mates' jobs for the morning of 31 December for several young activists engaged in clandestine work, including myself, with reliable

drivers from the Eintracht cooperative which had not yet been “absorbed”. There was, of course, a lot of work that day delivering food and drink. Nobody asked for names and addresses. We were just there carrying cases of sausages, doughnuts and weighty bottles all day long. The daughter of a comrade was a manageress at the cooperative, and she made sure that we were well-provisioned for the celebration. Being young people without regular income we were particularly happy about the quiet solidarity which we experienced that day.

At the beginning of 1934 I decided on a spectacular public operation. There had been a report in Amsterdam about a successful distribution of leaflets with which some comrades in Berlin had attracted attention in July 1933: They had dropped leaflets from the upper floors of department stores in the centre of Berlin. Such a thing had to be possible in Essen as well. Near the Limbecker Platz, a busy thoroughfare near the town centre, was the Althof department store (burnt down during the war and now part of the Karstadt group). At the corner near the Limbecker Platz the department store had a tower-like attic (see the photograph at the beginning of this chapter). In this attic there was a café with toilets. On-the-spot inspection with Albert Weichert revealed that this was an ideal site for the leaflet operation.

I drafted an inflammatory text. We produced a nice pack of at least 250 leaflets in our duplicator. We waited for a windy day, chose a time when traffic was at a peak and went to the place of action, not without some initial pounding of hearts. Albert stuck around nearby to keep a lookout, careful not to cause attention. Behind a bolted door with the “Occupied” sign showing outside I unpacked the leaflets and with a few well-aimed throws entrusted them to the wind. I saw them tumbling down happily for a little while, then rushed out of the department store, Albert following me closely.

A few minutes later, we had just jumped on a Number 9 tram headed for Viehofer Platz, when cars with SA and police rushed in and sealed off the area around the department store. In order to watch the goings-on from a safe vantage point we got the tram at Viehofer Platz as planned and boarded one going in the opposite direction to Essen-West, the Krupp industrial estate, and thus we passed the Limbecker Platz again where a large number of uniformed and plainclothes police were busy collecting the leaflets and searching for the perpetrators. Even though many passers-by had witnessed the action and the town talked about it for days, the Nazi press

hushed up the incident. The Gestapo could hardly admit that the KJVD comrades had escaped them.

Thinking back I am surprised that the huge power apparatus of the Nazis failed for so long—I was working illegally in the Ruhr area for nearly a year—to catch up with me. The relatively extensive network of clandestine connections with many comrades in many towns in the Ruhr area was, however, constructed in such a way that the Nazi bloodhounds, if not helped by luck, would be caught helplessly in it without ever reaching the centre of whose existence they were certainly aware. However, before the summer of 1934 arrived I had to give up my work in the Ruhr area. Events in the spring had shown how insufficiently secure my situation would be if the Nazi search system was improved.

It must have been in February 1934 that I went to Düsseldorf with Albert Weichert where an important meeting with other KJVD activists was to take place.

When we were about to get off the train at the main station Albert, who had gone on ahead, saw that check-points had been set up on the platforms and that two of our comrades had fallen into their hands. So far as he remembers, they were arrested. We stayed on the train, continued to Benrath, as Albert mentions in his memoirs, and took a train back to Essen where I changed quarters as a precautionary measure.

This unpleasant incident was soon followed by another one. One night after I had met two young comrades a police officer stopped me in front of the Lichtburg cinema in Essen and asked me to accompany him to have my identity checked. When this was done, they let me go. Was I being “shadowed”? Did someone know or guess what political work I was doing? Was I already on their books as a Saarbrücken KJVD activist? Had they let me go to find out my connections? Were they lenient because I was a Saarlander? They were wooing the Saarland, as an expression of which they allowed a delegation of Saarland workers a short time after, on 19 May 1934, to visit the imprisoned Ernst Thälmann. Or did the Essen police really believe that I was a thief, a vagabond youth as they had told me an explanation for my arrest?

There was no definite answer to these questions. I had to suspect the worst. In any case, the police now knew that a certain Erich Honecker from the Saarland lived or had lived in Essen. I had given the detectives—credibly as I thought—the impression that I was in Essen only for a few days to find out about job opportunities in the Ruhr area. When they let me go I did

everything to give them the impression that I had left in the direction of Saarbrücken.

Three years later, in June 1937, during my trial before the "People's Court" it was demonstrated that the police throws nothing away. The indictment read: "On 15 February 1937* district detective secretary Schröder watched the accused Honecker when he met the fugitive KJVD activists Weinand and Mark at Essen. He then arrested him in front of the Lichtburg cinema under the pretext of suspected theft in order to check his identity. As Honecker presumed that his arrest had to do with his political activity, he left the same day for Saarbrücken."

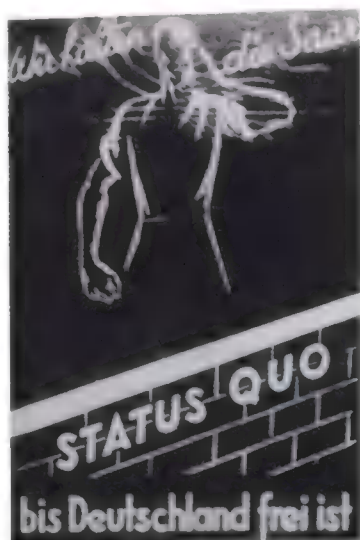
During the trial the question was raised as to whether the accused Honecker was identical with that "Herbert" who had directed KJVD activities in the Ruhr area during 1933/34. Since all comrades called by the prosecution denied such an identity—about which I shall have more to say later—the evidence given by district detective secretary Schröder was all-important. In order to show off the efficiency of his department he claimed that I had been under observation since my arrival from the Saarland until my departure immediately after my arrest in front of the Lichtburg cinema. This bragging on the part of the detective force exonerated me, certainly not through any intention of theirs, of the suspicion of having been "Herbert", a fact which was important in determining my sentence.

On 15 February, however, I had no hope at all that the Lichtburg incident would one day turn out in my favour. On the contrary, the Gestapo needed only to reconnoitre in the Saarland to find out what part I played in the KJVD. As I found out much later, after 1945, from retrieved files, two reports about me were received in Berlin during spring and summer 1934. One arrived early in March from the Düsseldorf Gestapo and signalled the presence in Essen of the KJVD activist Erich Honecker from the Saarland. The second report, dated July 1934, was the result of charges against a group of comrades who had been found guilty of illegally transporting literature from the Saarland to Germany, one of whom—no doubt under the impression that I was safely in the Saarland—had mentioned my name. After that I was indicted and they were looking for me.

However, as I said, I knew nothing of that then. I only found out later. In the spring of 1934, however, I learned about another incident which indicated caution. In March, the Essen Gestapo summoned 17 girls and 12

*Author's note: they meant, of course, 1934.

youths for interrogation. They were members of a Friends of Nature group whom Albert Weichert had known earlier and whom he had employed in the distribution of leaflets in January 1934. I knew about it and had myself talked to leading members of the group. Albert succeeded in time in briefing those summoned to make harmless and non-contradictory statements. They were to tell the Gestapo that they sang together, went for outings and practised folk dancing, no politics at all. The young people stuck to this story and all were sent home. But we could not take this lightly. Finally, in spring 1934, a courier from Berlin arrived and told us that the party's intelligence service had found out that the Gestapo was in possession of the cover names of the KJVD leadership in the Ruhr area. We were to proceed to Holland immediately. Albert stayed on in Essen for a while because his mother was dying. He was to "lie low" and then follow us to Holland. We said a cordial farewell. In December 1934 he was arrested at Essen, sent for trial and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. We were not to see each other until 1937 and then at the People's Court in Berlin to which he was brought from Herford prison to give evidence in the proceedings against me. Even in this difficult situation he proved himself to be very brave.



"Beat Hitler on the Saar"—the rallying cry of the election campaign 1934—35.
Poster of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

SIGNALEMENT — DESCRIPTION.	
Plaats en datum van geboorte	Geboortestroom — femme — wife
Lieu et date de naissance	
Place and date of birth	21 September 1911
Woonplaats	
Domicile	AMSTERDAM
Gelaatsvorm	
Visage	Visage
Face	
Kleur der ogen	
Couleur des yeux	Bleue
Colour of eyes	
Kleur der haren	
Couleur des cheveux	Blond
Colour of hair	
Byzondere teekenen	
Signes particuliers	
Special marks	

Foto

Foto

Foto

Stempel

Stempel

Handtekening van den houder

Signature du titulaire — Signature of bearer

H. Tjaden

en van zijne echtgenote

et de sa femme — and of his wife

Kinderen — enfants — children

Naam — leeftijd — geslacht

Nome — age — sexe

Christnaam — age — sex

Two pages from the Dutch passport issued in 1935
in the name of 'Marten Tjaden'.

VII

Resistance in the Saarland and Berlin

In autumn 1934 I was recalled on the orders of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the KPD from clandestine work in the Reich, which I had been performing latterly in the districts of Pfalz, Hesse, Baden and Württemberg to take part in the impending battle over the referendum in the Saarland. On a round trip together with Herbert Wehner, then an alternate member of the Politbureau of the KPD and now leader of the parliamentary SPD in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic, I drove back through Wiebelskirchen. Wehner, known then under his cover name Kurt Funk, asked me what turn-out I expected in the town. I said 30 to 35 per cent at the most. He would not believe me. On 13 January it turned out to be even considerably less. The majority voted for the return to the Reich even though since 1933 this meant the Third Reich of Hitler and the Nazis.

The majority of Saarlanders were not for Hitler at all but against him, only they succumbed to nationalistic propaganda. On 1 March 1935 Hitler "brought them home" in order to cast them into the Second World War on 1 September 1939. As a part of the Third Reich the Saarland experienced only four and a half years of peace. These were four and a half years of preparations for the bloodiest war in the history of mankind, which brought

death and destruction to the people of the Saarland as well. Thus history showed that joining Hitler's Germany was a disaster and that at the time there existed only one sensible alternative for the Saarland: maintaining the *status quo*. Joining France, a third possibility provided for in the Versailles Treaty in the referendum to be held 15 years after the separation from Germany, was simply out of the question for the vast majority of the Saar population. During the 15 years of French occupation and administration by the League of Nations political groups favouring union with France had never gained more than 2.7 per cent of the region's roughly 700,000 votes in elections.

The KPD had always, since 1918/19, advocated a return of the Saarland to Germany, as I have shown. But we were thinking of a return of the "red Saarland" to a progressive, peaceful, socialist Germany in which workers and peasants would have a say and could reap the fruits of their labours for themselves; in which militarists and armament profiteers would be stripped of their power and expropriated—a Germany on the side of the Soviet Union. That was the meaning of the long-standing battle-cry of the Communists which I had quoted in September 1931 at the end of my contribution to the programmatic brochure *Der Weg zur Freiheit* (The Road to Freedom): "Long live the fight for a red Saarland in a free socialist Germany."

This aim was in no way as unrealistic as Patrik von zur Mühlen in his book *Schlagt Hitler an der Saar! Abstimmungskampf, Emigration und Widerstand im Saargebiet 1933—35* (Beat Hitler on the Saar! Referendum Campaign, Emigration and Resistance in the Saarland 1933—35) erroneously asserts. This informative book, published in Bonn in 1979, offers in fact sufficient evidence of the strong and growing influence of the KPD in the Saarland during those years. And in the Reich the most aggressive groups among the arms manufacturers had hoisted their Hitler into the saddle so that he would put a bloody, dictatorial end to the growing influence of Ernst Thälmann's party on the masses and to his policy of a united front of all working people. Until 1933 a "free socialist Germany" was a real possibility, not an unrealistic pipe-dream. However, the more Nazism with its terror and demagogy took hold in Germany, and the longer united campaigns of all antifascists failed to materialise, the more the real chances of reaching the original goals faded. A change of thinking set in. In the course of 1934 the party reluctantly came to favour the *status quo* for the Saarland.

Luitwin Bies, in his previously mentioned book about the class struggle

in the Saarland between 1919 and 1935, calls the battle over the referendum during 1934/35 "a tough and unequal struggle". This is the root of the matter. Nobody should think that we considered the *status quo* to have any particular appeal to the electorate. The Latin term alone, the meaning of which was difficult to explain to most voters, was a real handicap. Translated, it meant that things should remain as they were. But who in the Saarland wanted things to remain as they were then? From the economic and social points of view no worker, no peasant, hardly any artisan, shopkeeper or small businessman could seriously wish things to remain as they were in 1934.

In view of the impending referendum French businessmen had largely withdrawn their capital from the Saarland. They even withdrew short-term credit on which Saarland shopkeepers had relied for years to buy French goods. German business interests even managed, with the help of the Nazi authorities, to buy up large quantities of goods in the Saarland and to freeze the bank accounts of the sellers in the Reich until after the referendum. With their "flight of capital" and "shrinking of capital" French and German financial circles in quiet accord created an artificial financial crisis in the Saarland, which immediately before the referendum could only exacerbate the economic crisis. Thus unemployment reached the figure of 51,000 in 1934, the highest ever registered in the region.

The Saarland's iron and steel industry, even though still largely owned by French and Belgian interests, had as early as 1931 been absorbed into the cartel of German heavy industry. Thus the steel kings of the Saarland profited from the rearmament of Nazi Germany by 1933, but this did not stop them from being also chief suppliers of gun turrets and other war material for the Maginot Line. But who among the German and French soldiers who faced each other in battle during the winter of 1939/40 in the bunkers of the *Westwall* and the Maginot Line as "archenemies" would know that the same Saarland steel kings had profited from both of these strategically useless constructions?

The mightiest ironmaster of the Saarland at the time was Hermann Röchling, known as the "Lord of Völklingen". Röchling had gone to see Hitler on 31 March 1933 and submitted a plan for the return of the Saarland in the course of the forthcoming referendum, and Hitler accepted it. Röchling, who knew how minimal the Nazis' chances in the Saarland were, suggested a convenient political alliance of the bourgeois parties in the Saarland including the strong Centre party, a party whose "self-dissolution"

in the Third Reich Hitler was already working on. It occurred a few weeks later. On 3 May 1933, one day after the Nazis stormed the trade union offices in Germany, Röchling saw Hitler again. Luitwin Bies in his book has described the various phases of the Röchling-Hitler conspiracy in detail. On 15 July 1933, the formation of the "German Front" was announced, in which the bourgeois parties had joined the Nazis and thus, as in the Reich, had practically "dissolved themselves".

The "German Front" used the catch-phrase: "Whoever is not for Germany is for France." This nationalistic demagoguery not only sounded more attractive than the Latin *status quo* but, more importantly, enjoyed incomparably stronger material support: Röchling's capital, the financial and propaganda resources of the Third Reich, and particularly the radio which by then had found its way into many households and which the Nazis knew very well how to exploit for the fanning of mass hysteria. Goebbels himself came to Zweibrücken and shouted his promises across the border: unemployment would be wiped out within a few days; all problems would be dealt with "generously" after the return of the Saarland; and other promises galore.

We had to face this mighty force of money, demagoguery, lies and blackmail, even though we had no illusions about the outcome of the referendum in our realistic assessment of the opposing forces. But we Communists knew what kind of "generous solutions" the Saarland people had coming to them. True, there were a few amongst us who said seriously: "Back to Germany even if it means going to a concentration camp." But this slogan understandably did not catch on, least of all with comrades who had already worked illegally in the Third Reich. We knew everyday life in Nazi Germany from our own experience. We had seen for ourselves where the unemployed in the Third Reich disappeared to: into armaments factories and into "Labour Service" camps. We knew that the material situation of workers in the Third Reich had not improved one iota. And we had seen how Communists, Socialists and trade unionists had been arrested, tortured and beaten to death. This was why we faced the unequal battle with hardheaded determination.

When I returned to the Saarland in autumn 1934, I had a year of strenuous clandestine activity behind me, a year of intense vigilance, a year of perpetual change of domicile, a year without sufficient means of subsistence, a year of hope and of set-backs, a year of constant danger but also one of manifold, uplifting solidarity. When I hear nowadays of solidarity actions by the

working population of the GDR, particularly by young people, for persecuted Communists and other freedom fighters, I often remember with gratitude the help I was given at the time, in the Netherlands for instance, where I really felt a strong sense of solidarity after I had to leave the Ruhr area and before I left for more underground work in southwest Germany. At that time the family of Anne Frank, who originally came from Frankfurt-am-Main, had found shelter in Amsterdam; later her diary was to horrify millions.

In summer 1934 I was to go to Moscow to attend the 7th World Congress of the Communist International in the capacity of chief adviser of the KJVD southwest districts. I already had my passport and flight ticket. The presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern decided that in the interest of thorough preparation the congress should be delayed till the first half of 1935. Thus I was free to devote myself fully to the struggle in the Saarland. As I have mentioned, I was chief adviser of the KJVD for the southwest districts: Pfalz, Hesse, Württemberg, Baden and the Saarland. Within the party Herbert Wehner had the same area of responsibility as chief adviser. I learned a lot from him at the time. After the murder of John Schehr he wrote an article for the Saarbrücken *Arbeiter-Zeitung* about this brave Communist which touched me deeply.

It is often assumed that until the re-incorporation of the Saarland into Germany on 1 March 1935, many activists of political parties banned in the Third Reich were legally staying in the Saarland. This is not true. Whereas as a native Saarlander I could work legally in the Saarland but only illegally in the Third Reich, comrades from the Reich could not legally be politically active in the Saarland. Nevertheless I met quite a number of well-known comrades in the Saarland at the time.

Apart from Herbert Wehner I came to know best Max Maddalena, KPD member of the Reichstag. He was a trade union leader well-known and respected internationally, who was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Nazis in 1937 and who died in the Brandenburg-Görden prison in 1943 from the effects of imprisonment; I also got to know Franz Dahlem, member of the Politbureau of the KPD, after exile and concentration camp a leading contributor to the growth of party and state in the German Democratic Republic, still active today as a writer despite old age; and Hermann Schubert, at the time member of the Politbureau of the KPD.

During the months of the Saarland battle I also met such comrades as Alexander Abusch, then working as a party journalist, today a well-known

journalist and writer in the German Democratic Republic; Lene Berg, now an experienced Marxist-Leninist sociologist; Erich Glückauf, who later took part in the liberation battle of the Spanish people and worked as a communist activist until the end of his life; Hans Kippenberger, who in 1923 already had taken part in the Hamburg uprising and worked in the field of military policy; Albert Norden, already well-known as a party journalist and since his return from exile in North America in 1946 taking a leading part in the development of the socialist press in the German Democratic Republic, a long-standing member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, author of numerous political works; Max Reimann, in 1920 already a member of the Red Army of the Ruhr, after 1945 for many years the head of the West German KPD; Hans Schrecker, today with the Berlin foreign policy journal *horizont*; Friedel Stein; Anton Switalla who showed his valour during the Hamburg uprising, from 1933 in the antifascist resistance and from 1936 in the liberation battle of the Spanish people, and who after 1945 helped to build up the armed forces of the German Democratic Republic; and Otto Winzer.

Of the leading activists of the youth federation I got to know Paul Verner more closely; he was then chief editor of the KJVD organ *Die junge Garde* (The Young Guard), later a participant in the fight for freedom of the Spanish people, today a member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED. I worked almost every day with Hans Jennes who had come to the Saarland from Holland in 1934 to take over the district leadership of the KJVD of the Saarland by order of the Central Committee of the KJVD. The collaboration with Hans Jennes, now General Secretary of the Association of Victims of Nazism in the Federal Republic, was successful even though Hans was not a Saarlander and could not work legally while I as a local could. Hans organised dozens of gatherings where I usually spoke together with representatives of the Socialist Workers' Youth and the Christian Youth.

Several progressive writers supported our battle in the Saarland. I remember a personal encounter with Hans Marchwitza, the author of the already mentioned novel *Sturm auf Essen*. A special experience was the joint battle with Erich Weinert, the eloquent political poet whose verse I knew from the workers' press and whom I now got to hear and know personally. Weinert, chased out of Germany, had installed himself in an inn in the woods near Forbach on the French side of the border in order to support our fight in the referendum with his printed and recited poems. Not being

a Saarlander, he was given, by the Saarland authorities, permission to speak in public only on condition that he would not deal with political subjects. Usually there was a gendarme present at his meetings to make sure the poet kept to this stipulation. Weinert opened his recital by saying that he would only read poems, and that the lyrics had, of course, nothing to do with politics. The gendarmes were misled but the Nazi press howled about every new militant poem and demanded a ban on the popular poet.

Many Weinert poems, with datelines such as "Forbach 1934" or "Saarbrücken 1934", were printed only after 1945. Entitled *Rufe in die Nacht—Gedichte aus der Fremde 1933 bis 1943* (Calls into the Night—Poems from Abroad 1933-43) he himself published and prefaced them in Berlin in 1947, acknowledging the courageous attitude of the Saarland comrades who in 1934 often had to protect him against infiltrated Nazi thugs.

Of Weinert's poems from that time I still remember well "John Schehr and his Comrades", written at Forbach in 1934, "To a Young Comrade" (Saarbrücken 1934) and the warning call "To the Deluded Germans" (Saarbrücken 1934). When Weinert with his mighty voice recited "John Schehr and Comrades", the closing line of which promised "settling of accounts on behalf of John Schehr and his comrades", it seemed the applause would never end. And when Weinert called out to the young comrades operating underground in the Third Reich:

True to yourselves, the youth of Liebknecht still
Lives on, and silent thousands daily go
Mid lurking death their duty to fulfil.
No hangman's law can break the mighty will
That shall bring all this hangman's order low . . .

I remembered my KJVD comrades in the Ruhr area, in Hesse, Baden, Württemberg and Pfalz. In his exhortation "To the Deluded Germans" Weinert warned against Hitler's expansionist urge and conjured up the vision of a new world war such as would become a bloody reality only five years later.

I was always glad when called upon to join Erich Weinert in a meeting or public gathering. And that happened often, particularly in November and December 1934, during the last series, so to speak, of gatherings before the referendum. Thus on 20 November the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* invited to a youth rally at the Ens Dorf miners club the following speakers: Erich Honecker,

Willy Melwig (leader of the Saarbrücken Socialist Workers' Youth) and Peter Doma, a young Catholic and member of the delegation of Saarland workers who had visited Ernst Thälmann in prison; it also announced: "Erich Weinert recites." On 23 November the paper announced for the same evening a further youth rally of the united front at the "Bürgerbräu" at Saarlouis—the same speakers and "Erich Weinert recites". During those weeks we were on the move every day and on many evenings spoke in more than one location.

Erich Weinert's signature also appeared on the appeal of the organising committee for the congress of all the Saarland youth at Saarbrücken on 17 November 1934. The committee which represented the by now constituted united antifascist front included in its rank the lawyer Walter Sander, Bruno von Salomon, Fritz Pfordt (political leader of the Saarland KPD since June 1934), Max Braun (chairman of the Saarland SPD), Emil Schuler (youth leader of the German Trade Union Federation), the young Catholic Peter Doma, Fritz Nickolay of the KJVD, Willy Melwig and Walter Kennel of the Socialist Workers' Youth, Young Farmer Reinhold Bies, Labour Service recruit Nicolaus Spelz, and, of course, Erich Weinert.

The congress of Saarland youth took place on Sunday, 16 December 1934 in the "Deutsches Haus" at Burbach. Six hundred and sixty-three young delegates from all levels of society and the most divergent parts of the political and ideological spectrum, including even some members of the Hitler Youth, who were having second thoughts, came together for a moving antifascist manifestation. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reported extensively on this congress, the historic significance of which is undisputed today; these documents have since been published in the brochure "Fight for a united front—documents on the 60th anniversary of the KPD". Luitwin Bies, too, in his book reports in detail on the congress. I can therefore restrict myself here to three quotations: two from my speech at the congress and one from the message which the congress addressed to the youth of the Saarland.

"Today's Germany is not the Germany of youth," I said to the delegates. "Fascism has trampled into the mud all the desires, all aspirations, all demands of the young with cynical brutality, with jackboots. Youth is flung out of factories—not just for a day, not just for a year but for ever deprived of a future. A few days ago the local mouthpiece of the Hitler Youth wrote: 'Whoever takes his oath on our flag has nothing left that belongs to him.' (Shouts of "That's true!"—Laughter.) Yes, that is true. Whoever takes the oath on Hitler's flag owns nothing any more, he must give up his youth,

his work and even his mind to receive instead a dagger of honour." (Vigorous applause).

After I had explained the imperialist class character of Hitler's fascism I spoke about youth ideals: "They tell us that youth needs ideals, that one must not look at everything from a materialistic point of view. I reply: Yes, youth not only needs ideals, it creates its own ideals. And the highest ideal of youth at all times has been the battle for freedom and against tyranny, the battle for the realisation of its demands, the battle for its right to live. But what we see in Hitler's Germany is the annihilation of youth's ideals, the exploitation of youth for crimes against itself and its future and the future of the whole nation. Whoever puts forward war as an ideal annihilates youth."

The message of the congress of the Saarland youth calls on everybody "to stand up for the victory of the *status quo* on that fateful day for the working youth of the Saarland, 13 January, regardless of party or religious loyalties. This is the heaviest blow we can deal the brown-shirted barbarians, this will help our friends in the Reich to cast off their fetters. Whoever cares for the working German people, whoever wants to see German youth not wither and perish but flourish must give his best for the victory of the *status quo*. Victory for the *status quo* will make the Saarland the bridgehead in the battle for the liberation of Germany. If we beat Hitler in the Saarland we shall soon beat him in Berlin also. As soon as Hitler is removed the Saarland will decide in favour of joining a free Germany in a second referendum as guaranteed by the latest meeting of the League of Nations."

This was our message on 16 December 1934. But on 2 December—as André Simon reports in his book *J'accuse*, published in Paris in 1940—the French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, had received Hitler's future Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, in Paris and secretly assured him of a referendum result favourable to Hitler. In response Hitler promised that Germany would have no further claims against France. History has taken its revenge for this conspiracy: Laval was sentenced to death as a collaborator and executed in 1945. Ribbentrop was sentenced to death as a war criminal by the Nuremberg tribunal of nations and executed in 1946.

The Central Committee of the French Communist Party supported our call for the *status quo* in 1934/35. It declared that the party stood firmly by the working population of the Saarland and Germany in the battle against French and German capitalists. The Catholic bishops of Trier and Speyer, however, betrayed Christian workers in the Saarland and large numbers of

priests in their own Church by having a pastoral letter read from the pulpits which supported the joining of the Saarland to Hitler's Germany. Although the traditionally strongest forces in the Saarland—the KPD, the SPD, parts of the Centre party and the Christian unions—unequivocally supported the *status quo*, Hitler's "referendum success" was practically sealed with Laval's promise and the bishops' pastoral letter.

We fought right up to the last minute. In 1977 a man from Wiebelskirchen remembered in front of television cameras in the Federal Republic: "It was just before the referendum on 13 January 1935, perhaps at the end of December or early in January 1935. Erich Honecker stood at the Stumm monument with a big pack of leaflets, which he distributed at the main entrances of the Neunkirchen iron works to the foundry workers as they came off their shifts ... I admired his courage and talked to him about it. He said that this was his conviction and it did not require special courage..."

The referendum result turned out even worse than I had expected: Of the 540,000 voters supposedly 470,000 voted for the return to Germany and only 47,000 for the *status quo*. At the time there were speculations and even some foundation for suspicion that the figures had been rigged. Individual causes for suspicion were presented in a study entitled "The Saar Plebiscite of 1935" in the US magazine *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. Rigging may explain the unusually high number of votes in favour. For the result of the referendum, however, that is for a majority decision in favour of an "Anschluss", such manipulation had not been necessary. Time had been just too short to enlighten the Saar population about the terrorist and warlike nature of Hitler's fascism, between the summer of 1934, when the KPD and the SPD agreed to endorse the *status quo* line, and 13 January 1935.

The Nazi terror started immediately after the referendum even though the date for handing the Saarland over to Hitler had been set for 1 March 1935. On 28 February 1935 I had to leave the Saarland for good. I said farewell to my parents, my brothers and sisters and friends at Wiebelskirchen, Neunkirchen and Saarbrücken. A last look at the iron works at Neunkirchen, at the monument of "King Stumm" which is still there today ... Not until a whole decade later, at the end of 1945, should I see the place of my birth, childhood and youth again during a short visit. The local inhabitants' register mentions under the date of 28 February 1935 my name with a note: "Left for unknown destination."

I went to Paris, to the foreign headquarters of the KPD. At the Reich

conference of the KJVD from 13 to 18 December 1934 in Moscow I had been elected a member of the Central Committee of the KJVD. I had not been able to attend the Reich conference in person because on 16 December I gave my speech to the delegates of the Saar youth at Burbach. But I learned of my appointment in the Saarland in December. In Paris a new task was waiting for me: leading the underground KJVD organisation in Berlin, in the "lion's den". Of course, I could not go there as "Erich Honecker of Wiebelskirchen/Saarland". I had to change by gradual stages into the sailor Martin Tjaden, born 21 September 1911 in Amsterdam, living in Amsterdam. A passport photograph was taken in Paris. I received the Dutch passport in Switzerland. Via Basel I came to Zurich and stayed there for four weeks. Then I moved on, from Switzerland via Austria and Czechoslovakia to Berlin.

In order to acquaint myself with the new situation I studied the latest Comintern documents, particularly the material prepared for the 7th World Congress of the Communist International which was to take place in Moscow from 15 July to 20 August 1935. At the congress the experiences of the German and international workers' movement in the fight against fascism and the struggle for a united antifascist front were thoroughly discussed and theoretically generalised. The fight against fascism and imperialist war became the focal point of the international communist movement. This political line would soon become particularly important in France and Spain.

A week after the end of the 7th Congress I bought a railway ticket from Prague to Nuremberg and travelled via Eger into the Third Reich. The Dutch passport caused no suspicion at the border. So I went to Berlin, moved into clandestine quarters, looked around in the Reich's capital and made contacts with underground KJVD groups, especially with Bruno Baum who was then in charge of the Berlin organisation (and after the liberation in 1945 was for many years a member of the Central Committee of the SED, serving in leading functions with the district committees of the party in Berlin and Potsdam) and started my work.

In the summer of 1935 Berlin still looked outwardly like the metropolis it had been before 1933. A lot of traffic, advertising, bustle, tourists and hectic activity. The opera square, where Goebbels on 10 May 1933 had the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin as well as those of countless progressive German poets and thinkers thrown into the flames of an enormous bonfire, showed no trace of the fire. The banishment of many artists and scientists

was not immediately obvious. But if one looked more closely, if one read the press which had been "assimilated" by Goebbels, if one listened to the radio under his direction, if one looked into the faces of the inhabitants of working-class areas, then the change from the period before 1933 became noticeable. It was not only the increased number of uniformed men in the streets which indicated that Berlin had become the headquarters for the preparation of a new world war.

In Hitler's Reich capital one could see queues in front of food shops as early as the autumn of 1935. The Nazis proclaimed: Guns instead of butter. Members of the KJVD photographed one such queue and produced a lot of prints with the headline "Queues in front of shops! Not in Moscow but in Berlin!" A copy of this photograph leaflet was found in my living quarters after I was arrested and went into the court files.

In March 1935 Hitler had reintroduced conscription—against the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. In June there followed the Reich Labour Service Law which compelled the whole male population between the ages of 18 and 25 to paramilitary "Labour Service". An "Air Defence Law" was passed. Arms production in the factories was constantly accelerated. Thus it was not surprising that we published a leaflet on the occasion of the autumn military exercises of the Nazi Wehrmacht and distributed it, observing strict precautionary measures. Besides, I undertook steps to strengthen the KJVD, to enlarge its organisation and to coordinate the resistance battle. Via courier I was in touch with comrades in Prague. For an exchange of views I myself went to Czechoslovakia once more in November. There I had talks with several KJVD members, amongst them Käthe (Sabina) Hager—who after 1946 worked in the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and the Women's Democratic Federation of Germany (DFD) in Berlin, and with Max Spangenberg who today is on the staff of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism attached to the Central Committee of the SED.

During the political work in Berlin in late autumn 1935 I also met Kurt Hager, then chief adviser for some central and north German districts (Berlin, Lower Saxony, Pomerania, Saxony-Anhalt), and latterly for many years a member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED. As I found out later, Kurt Hager, who like myself lived illegally in Germany, had to leave the country in the winter of 1935/36 because the Gestapo had discovered that he had been the initiator of a spectacular resistance action at Stuttgart on 15 February 1933: Antifascists, by cutting

■ post office cable, had made the nationwide transmission of one of Hitler's speeches impossible. After having to leave Germany Kurt Hager went to Spain where he took part in the liberation battle of the Spanish people as ■ member of the International Brigade.

When nowadays I think back to the autumn of 1935, it was not so much the complicated conditions of my clandestine work that weighed heavily on me as the lack of sufficient contact with those people who until February 1935 had been closest to me. The uncertainty about my family who had remained in the Saarland was no matter of indifference to me. At that time my father was compulsorily retired by the Dreschen mine. My parents bought a cow to sustain their livelihood. But I found this out only later at Brandenburg-Görden prison when my sister Gertrud at last received permission to visit me.



Photographs taken at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin
after the author's arrest in December 1935.



The gaol at Brandenburg-Görden, Cell Block II,
'A' Wing, 1937.

VIII

The years in prison

Early in 1935 the Gestapo succeeded in getting on the tracks of Bruno Baum, myself and other comrades of the KJVD committee for Berlin-Brandenburg. On 3 December 1935 we were expecting the arrival of a courier of the KJVD Central Committee from Prague. Since the colleague assigned to meet her was unable to make it for some reason, I myself went to the agreed rendezvous at Solinger Strasse in Berlin. The courier, a Czechoslovak comrade called Sarah Fodorova, gave me a deposit slip for a suitcase packed with newspapers and camouflage literature by the KPD and the KJVD. On the same evening I picked up the suitcase from the left-luggage office at the Anhalter Bahnhof. When I had received it I noticed that I was being watched and followed. I managed to escape the Gestapo agents in a taxi from Berlin's Zoo railway station. However, the next morning I was arrested as I left my flat at Brüsseler Strasse in the Wedding district of Berlin.

The days which followed 4 December 1935 at the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin's Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse and in the barracks of the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* in Berlin-Tempelhof were not repeated during my almost 10 years of imprisonment. They are among those which one never forgets. At the same time they were a testing time for a young man who still had his whole life before him: I was 23 years old. Neither the physical nor the

psychological tortures by the Gestapo officers nor the many interrogations by Nazi magistrates could make me budge from my communist view of the world.

When I look through the records of the hearings before the Second Senate of the People's Court on 7 and 8 June 1937 I am still proud of our communist youth organisation, its activists and members. At the time of the arrests, in early December 1935, there were eight members of the Berlin-Brandenburg district committee of the KJVD; at the trial before the People's Court four; at the time of sentencing only three: Bruno Baum, Edwin Lautenbach and myself. What was the reason for this? When in summer 1935 I arrived in Germany on the orders of the Central Committee of the KPD in France via Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia in order to assume the leadership of the Berlin-Brandenburg district committee of the KJVD, Kurt Hager and Bruno Baum handed their contacts over to me by stages. Bruno Baum was to go into exile and to support the antifascist struggle from there.

Despite the means and methods they employed against us the Gestapo never found out that they had caught the leading nucleus of the Berlin-Brandenburg KJVD and a member of the Central Committee of the KJVD. The more "subtle" methods of the examining magistrate at the People's Court, Hans-Joachim Rehse, did not succeed either—as the records and the bill of indictment show. In the event, this judge was sentenced to five years' imprisonment after the war for complicity in murder and other Nazi crimes—but the legal authorities in the Federal Republic let him go free upon payment of 200,000 marks. Anyway so the Hamburg magazine *Stern* reported some years ago.

Neither the Gestapo nor the investigating officers had a chance against the steadfastness and the courage of our comrades-in-arms. Thus Emilie Knappe, political chief of the KJVD subdistrict branch in Moers, who took an active part in the antifascist battle of our youth federation in the Ruhr area during 1933/34, had identified me from a photograph during an interrogation, assuming that I had gone abroad in the meantime. However, when she learned that I had been arrested and was called upon to testify against me in my trial, she retracted her statement. She firmly denied before the judges of the Second Senate of the People's Court that she knew me and had worked with me in the Ruhr area and denied the identity between the person in the passport photograph she had been shown and myself.

Also to be mentioned in this connection is our courageous and un-

forgettable comrade Grete Walter, at the time political chief of the KJVD's Berlin-Tempelhof subdistrict branch. On 21 October 1935 she was to be taken to yet another interrogation at the Gestapo's headquarters in Berlin's Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. She threw herself down a three-story staircase in order to escape further torture and to protect her comrades from arrest.

Such upright women and girls were then to be numbered in thousands among the members and activists of the KPD and KJVD. Without their commitment, courage and resourcefulness the breadth, variety and efficacy of our struggle against fascism and war would not have been possible. Countless proletarian women continued their unselfish, self-sacrificing and heroic activity for the cause of the revolutionary workers' movement during the Nazi rule in one of the most trying times history had imposed on them. Amongst them were girls and young women of the resistance group which Young Communist Herbert Baum had led, who in 1942/43 were transferred from the women's prison in Berlin's Barnimstrasse to the Berlin gaol of Plötzensee for execution. In a courageous action the young people, most of whom were Jewish, had set fire to the anti-Soviet propaganda exhibition "The Soviet Paradise" in Berlin's Lustgarten.

But to get back to the trial before the People's Court. When during the morning of the first day I was sent from the remand prison of Berlin-Moabit to a cell in the Bellevue Strasse I saw Albert Weichert for a moment, my comrade-in-arms from the Ruhr area between August 1933 and June 1934. He had been arrested on 28 December 1934 and sentenced to four years imprisonment by the *Oberlandesgericht* at Hamm in Westphalia in March 1935. Even in the preliminary interrogation my previous cover name "Herbert" had played a part. After Albert Weichert had been transferred to Münster prison he was interrogated four times by the already-mentioned examining magistrate Rehse of the People's Court, about my activity in the Ruhr area during 1933/34 as a centrally delegated representative, courier and education officer of the KJVD and about my connections with Amsterdam. The result was completely negative because the Nazi justice officials could not get anything out of him, not even my correct name.

At the beginning of 1937 Albert Weichert was sent from Herford prison—where he had been moved from Münster at the end of 1936—to the People's Court in Berlin as a prosecution witness against me. In the "black Maria" wagon of the train from Minden to Hanover he saw Richard Titze again. Under Gestapo torture the latter had admitted that he knew me from the antifascist work in the Ruhr area. Albert Weichert talked to him during the

trip and again in Hanover prison and finally in the Berlin-Plötzensee prison and persuaded him to retract his previous statement. When I saw Albert Weichert in the cell wing of the People's Court neither of us let on that we knew each other. During the second day of the trial he declared that he had never seen me before. Another young comrade denied the identity between myself and the photographs he had been shown.

After the prosecutor and the judges of the People's Court had achieved nothing with their "witnesses for the prosecution", the official defence lawyer who had been assigned to me, an SS officer, revealed his fascist mentality. He changed more and more into the role of prosecutor. He industriously searched the files in order to find anything at all to pin on me. Finally he presented the presiding judge with leaflets which I had written, addressed to the soldiers of the Nazi Wehrmacht—but I denied my authorship in court. It worked in my favour that the defence lawyer for Sarah Fodorova mentioned my statement according to which she had not known what was in the suitcase. He pointed out that so far I had always told the truth and that therefore there was no reason to doubt my statement in this respect. Those leaflets could have been considered "subversion" for which the penalty even then was death.

On 8 June 1937 the Second Senate of the People's Court passed sentence: Bruno Baum was given 13 years, I received 10 years and Edwin Lautenbach two and a half years imprisonment. In addition we were stripped of our civil rights. As a result of the latter I was found "unworthy" to be called up for service in Hitler's Wehrmacht in 1939 and again in a review in 1943. This was obviously the revenge of the Gestapo who only guessed much later what kind of fish they had netted. They therefore promised me a "happy reunion" after my release from prison. This would have been due on 8 December 1945 at 3.50 p. m. because the one and a half years I had spent while remanded in custody were counted as part of my sentence. Fortunately for me, a few months before that, on 27 April 1945, the Red Army arrived. But long and hard years were to pass before that happened.

Very grudgingly the Nazi judges had registered my deposition in the already mentioned court records "that I had not changed and would not change my conviction". The judgement read in part: "The accused Baum and Honecker are convinced and unrelenting adherents of communism as the extent and intensity of their illegal work for the KJVD and their depositions during the court hearings clearly prove. They have devoted themselves to the treasonable tasks assigned to them with extraordinary assiduity. The

positions they were given within the illegal organisation indicate the high esteem in which they were held by their superiors."

Basically I have nothing to add to this evaluation by the Nazi court, certainly nothing to the first part. The Nazi jurists had, for once, hit the nail on the head. As for the second part I would just like to say that if the judges had known the real extent of our antifascist activity in the KPD and KJVD the sentences would certainly have been different, both for Bruno Baum and myself. The Second Senate of the People's Court considered us too young to be capable of deserving the death sentence.

Gestapo records found after the liberation show that the Nazi authorities at the time were aware of hardly more than my antifascist activities in Berlin, and even that knowledge was only fragmentary. Otto Winzer wrote about this in his memoirs: "When I was working in the early '50s on the lectures which were later published as a book under the title *Zwölf Jahre Kampf gegen Faschismus und Krieg* (Twelve Years Fight against Fascism and War), I had to study a lot of Gestapo records. Among them was a report on the search for Erich Honecker. The amusing thing about the warrant is that it bears a date from a period when Erich Honecker had already been a prisoner at Brandenburg-Görden for quite a while. The political work and the illegal fight of Erich Honecker in various parts of Germany had apparently made the Gestapo so nervous that they were still searching for him when he was already under lock and key. To be persecuted with such blind hatred by the worst enemy of the working class and of all peace-loving mankind, Hitlerite fascism, is doubtless the highest acknowledgement to which a revolutionary and working-class leader can attain."

On 10 June 1937 I was moved from Berlin-Moabit remand prison to Berlin-Plötzensee and from there to Brandenburg-Görden on 6 July 1937. This latter penal institution had been built by the Social Democratic government of Prussia during the years of the Weimar Republic. The builders could hardly have imagined that the day would come when they themselves would suffer confinement in it. The Nazis considered Brandenburg-Görden to be one of the most secure prisons in the world. Cut off from the outside world by high walls it gave the impression of a modern dungeon designed to intimidate and depress the prisoners. The atmosphere was in keeping with this aim. The conditions in which the sentence was served were intended to demoralise and annihilate the political prisoners in particular, who made up some 2,200 out of a total of 3,000 prisoners. Not a few of the supervisors treated the political prisoners with utmost brutality. Conditions regarding

food, sanitary facilities and health were often appalling. During all those years hunger was our constant companion. Many comrades died from tuberculosis and other illnesses.

Most horrifying of all, however, were the executions which were carried out in a garage of the prison. Most of those who went to their death there were our comrades, often close acquaintances and good friends. While still infrequent at the beginning, the number of executions soon increased steadily until they reached over 30 each on two days of the week. And that month after month, year after year. Altogether in the period up to April 1945 more than 2,000 antifascists were murdered in that place of execution.

Despite the strictest isolation and supervision, as well as innumerable acts of harassment, the imprisoned Communists had managed to form a party organisation. They organised the determined resistance, the solidarity and cohesion of the political prisoners. When at first I was in strict isolation I was to experience this solidarity soon after my arrival. I received clandestinely a piece of bread, information about the international situation, the situation in the country and the happenings in the prison. This gave me strength and helped me to stand up to solitary confinement. Above all I was strengthened in my belief that the party lived and was continuing the fight even behind prison walls.

I was overjoyed when my sister Gertrud and her husband Hans Hoppstädter were given permission to visit me at Brandenburg-Görden. The prison rules, however, permitted this only very rarely, only two or three times if I remember correctly and only for half an hour at a time. We talked about many things that were on our minds and did not let the attending prison officer put us off. Apart from these rare visits which were stopped completely at the beginning of the war we could only write a few letters to each other, none of which arrived. In spite of everything it was good for me to know that my parents and my brothers and sisters were in good health and standing up to it all.

During my solitary confinement and throughout the following years in prison I read a lot in order to broaden my general education, above all Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare, and also *Ein Kampf um Rom* (The Battle for Rome) by the historical novelist Felix Dahn. There was hardly a field I was not interested in, from natural sciences to classical literature. We could borrow books from the prison library, progressive ones, of course, excluded. Bruno Leuschner, the assistant at the library, later on for many years ■

member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the SED, deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the Planning Commission in the German Democratic Republic, supplied us political prisoners with the best and most interesting titles.

It was important for me that after two years' solitary confinement, including the interrogation period, I was employed in the distribution of work to the prisoners outside their cells through the good offices of Robert Menzel, previously ■ KJVD activist, and after the liberation in 1945 active in leading functions within the Free German Youth and later deputy Minister of Transport in the German Democratic Republic. This gave me some freedom of movement and made contacts with other political prisoners possible. The party organisation succeeded little by little in placing political prisoners in assistants' functions. In this way Max Uecker, Harry Hüttel and myself became doctors' assistants, Max Uecker to the dentist and I to the prison doctor, Dr Müller. During this time I again saw Fritz Grosse, Chairman of the KJVD, Max Maddalena, Fritz Gäbler and other comrades.

Our work as assistants to the prison doctors was of considerable value to the party's clandestine organisation. We could establish and maintain contact between Communists and other political prisoners, pass on messages and help those comrades who most needed help. The doctors soon gave us ■ free hand in the selection of prisoners for examination and treatment and we told the assistants in the cell wings on which day which comrades should report to the doctor. We locked them into a waiting cell and fetched them for treatment only at the last moment which gave them time and opportunity to talk. As a rule new arrivals had to report to the doctor. We could therefore make first contacts with the comrades among them and establish connections with the secret party organisation. These comrades also gave us information on the policy of the KPD and its antifascist struggle, on the international situation, and on the situation in the Third Reich.

Scarce bits of information from the Nazi newspapers which we could lay our hands on now and then, and overheard conversations between prison officers, confirmed our impression that the Nazi régime was moving towards ■ war of aggression more and more openly. Many facts pointed in this direction. Just as Hitler had "brought the Saarland home" on 1 March 1935, German troops marched into Austria on 12 and 13 March 1938 and annexed the country. On 1 October 1938 the Sudetenland was "brought home" from the Czechoslovak Republic, the remaining Czech territories being occupied between 12 and 16 March 1939, and the Memelland "joined

the Reich" on 23 March 1939. Also in March 1939 the Spanish civil war ended with a bloody defeat for the democratic forces owing to the intervention by the fascist powers Germany and Italy and to the "non-intervention policy" of the other imperialist states. On the side of the Spanish democrats thousands of German Communists and other antifascists had fought, among them Alfred Neumann, for many years now a member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the SED, and Ernst Busch, the world-renowned singer and actor, (both incidentally also imprisoned at Brandenburg-Görden during the war). Many of these men gave their lives for the freedom of the Spanish people.

All these fascist acts of aggression had been possible only on account of the British and French policy of appeasement towards Hitler's Germany, which reached its peak in the surrender of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis with the Munich Agreement of 28 September 1938. The protagonists of this political course maintained that they agreed to the political and territorial claims of the Nazi rulers in order to "save world peace". In reality they prevented the collective resistance to aggression which had repeatedly been suggested by the Soviet Union, and encouraged annexations by fascist German imperialism. The latter's expansionist drive was to be directed towards the east, towards a military intervention against the USSR. This proved to be a fatal miscalculation which would demand enormous sacrifices from the nations of Europe and the world.

It is a universally known fact that the USSR tried right until the summer of 1939 to organise a joint defence with Britain and France against fascist aggression. When all these efforts had foundered on the attitude of the ruling circles in London and Paris, the Soviet Union found itself compelled to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany on 23 August 1939.

From various hints by the prison officers we had already learned two weeks earlier of negotiations between the foreign ministers of the two countries. When in the early morning of 24 August 1939 Nazi newspapers reported the signing of the treaty, Max Uecker and myself organised a get-together with Max Maddalena and Fritz Grosse in the dentist's waiting cell before 7 a. m. We were agreed that the signing of the treaty was a diplomatic success for the Soviet Union which thus escaped the danger of having to face a unified bloc of the imperialist powers. At the same time it retained its freedom of action and gained time to strengthen its defence potential. Further developments were to confirm our joint thinking which was shared by most political prisoners.

A few days later came the proof of how right Ernst Thälmann had been when before the presidential elections in 1932 he had warned: "Whoever votes for Hindenburg, votes for Hitler; whoever votes for Hitler votes for war." During all the years of Nazi rule Communists had fought against the ever-present danger of war. In 1939 this danger had become a terrible reality. Soon it would get even worse.

The day on which the Second World War was unleashed, that is the day on which in alleged response to the "Polish assault" on Gleiwitz radio station—planned by the Nazi leadership and enacted by Himmler's SS—fire was "returned", I was in the doctor's consulting room in Brandenburg-Görden. The doctors and the prison officers present paled when they learned about the invasion of Poland by the Wehrmacht. They became even more disquieted when on 3 September 1939 Great Britain and France declared war on Hitler's Germany and when the first air raid alarm sounded at the beginning of October 1939. But the victories of the "Greater German Wehrmacht" cheered them up after a while. For us political prisoners there was not the slightest doubt—despite the "lightning victories" of the Wehrmacht—that the war would end with the total defeat of the Nazi régime.

Towards the end of 1939 I was relieved of my duties as a doctor's assistant because, according to prison regulations, nobody was allowed to fill such a post for more than two years. For a while thereafter I became "string assistant" together with Bruno Leuschner and Robert Menzel. We had to bring bags full of sisal and hemp rope into cells to be unknotted. We used this kind of work too to maintain communications amongst the comrades. Even the "string sergeant", a particularly brutal individual, could not stop us.

In spring 1940 I became assistant to the works supervisor of the Brandenburg toy factory Lineol which after the outbreak of war had moved its production of toy soldiers to the prison. I had to carry cases of raw material to the cells and bring it back after the prisoners had processed it. This took me into many prison wings, into workrooms and into the kitchen wing. The works supervisor was no Nazi. Tacitly he permitted conversations between myself and the political prisoners. In this way I passed on messages and information which, of course, had to be encoded in so-called "slave language" which we soon mastered. Since the works supervisor rarely—and never closely—inspected the cases containing the material for the prisoners, I was able to smuggle reading matter and food to my comrades every now and then.

Everyone who has experienced fascism personally will realise that this involved risking one's life. The whole illegal activity went on, one might say, in the shadow of the guillotine. In case of discovery there would have been a new trial which, during the war, would inevitably have ended in death.

On the other hand, this political and moral solidarity amongst the comrades helped to sustain their will to resist, to strengthen their fighting spirit and to help them through many difficult hours—as witness the memoirs of Kurt Seibt who had been given a life sentence by the Nazis, and who has now for many years been chairman of the Central Auditing Commission of the SED: “I came to Brandenburg-Görden,” he writes, “after having been sentenced to life imprisonment. During the early days I shared a cell with some comrades. But soon I was put into strict solitary confinement. That meant a narrow cell facing north and thus never having any sunshine, with ■ small barred window high up, a collapsible bed, a small collapsible table and stool, ■ small wall chest, a jug of water and a bucket. Some of my comrades ... had to spend many, many years in this type of solitary confinement.

“More than anything else it was the strong vitality of the solidarity amongst the comrades in the prison which helped us to survive and keep our spirits up. The inner strength which we derived from our beliefs, the strong faith in the victory of the proletarian cause, was thus forged even more strongly. I experienced this sworn community of comrades from the first day. One of the comrades who helped me when I was cut off from the world in my solitary confinement was Erich Honecker. I knew already that he was an activist in the Young Communist League. He did a lot to make my solitary confinement more bearable. For instance he would sometimes smuggle a newspaper into my cell ... hidden in the box or bag containing my work. Even if it was a Nazi newspaper I had the opportunity to read and as ■ Marxist I knew how to read between the lines. In addition he sometimes brought me a piece of bread or cold meat. And anybody who knows what life in the prison was like will understand what this meant for me—not only for my stomach but also for my heart.”

In my various activities as an assistant in Brandenburg-Görden I met many comrades such as Ernst Altenkirch, Bernhard Behnke, Ignatz Bialas, Robert Dewey, Hermann Dünow, Max Frenzel, Emanuel Gomolla, Ferdinand Grändorf, Fritz Hoffmann, Fritz Jamin, Erwin Kerber, Fritz Lange, Alfred Lemnitz, Artur Mannbar, Fritz Menzel, Hans Mickin, Walter Mickin,

Hans Mikisch, Thomas Mrochen, Erich Paterna, Max Sens, Erich Winkler and Erich Ziegler. We were bound together by our communist beliefs, indomitable will-power and the certainty of final victory over Nazism.

In spring 1941 I was put into a cell together with Wilhelm Thiele whom I had first met as a doctor's assistant and later on saw again as a "string" and Lineol assistant. By then the Nazi Wehrmacht had occupied many European countries and was preparing its aggression against the Soviet Union.

The treacherous attack by Hitler's Germany on the world's first socialist state on 22 June 1941, and the advance of the Wehrmacht to the gates of Moscow and Leningrad affected us very much. In long discussions we tried to work out what had gone wrong. For me one thing was certain right from the first day: the socialist Soviet power would defeat the predatory Nazi German imperialism decisively. I was deeply convinced that the Soviet people would never bow to the aggressor. I had come to know their enthusiasm in Moscow and Magnitogorsk in 1930/31, their creative power and their unshakeable will to overcome even the greatest difficulties. This and the enormous industrial potential of the USSR convinced me that the Soviet people would stand up to the grave test of war and would drive the fascists from their country.

This was soon confirmed. Our joy was indescribable when in January 1942 we learned of the defeat of the German armies before Moscow. Prison officials who had come back from the eastern front reported how much Soviet partisans were harassing the Nazis in the occupied territories.

When in autumn 1942 the Reich Prosecutor of the People's Court gathered information about me from various Nazi government offices I had my second direct encounter with the Gestapo. A well-mannered slender young man with a university degree and the appropriate "humanist" education—one might say, a member of a new generation of SS men—had orders from Berlin Gestapo headquarters in Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse to have a "humane" talk with me. In this way I became familiar with the office of the prison governor, an *Oberregierungsrat* and SS officer called Dr Thuemmler. But this "humane" talk did not produce the result the Gestapo desired—no more so than the less "humane" talks in 1935/36.

On 12 October 1942 the prison governor reported that I had so far "shown good conduct and worked properly" from which it could be concluded that in the course of my penal servitude "I had come to see the error of my ways".

The Berlin Gestapo headquarters, however, arrived at a fundamentally

different conclusion. A letter to the Reich Prosecutor dated 13 November 1942 reads: "Honecker's political past and his intensive work for the illegal KPD show that he is a convinced communist activist. Even while remanded in custody he tried to continue his subversive activities. The court has also described him as an incorrigible adherent of communism. I am therefore not convinced that he has undergone a change of heart. In view of the war situation there is also the danger that he would again be drawn into the illegal KPD, all the more so as sufficient observation cannot be guaranteed ... I am therefore not in a position to recommend his release from prison before the end of his term."

As a qualified tiler, I was assigned to the prison's construction brigade in March 1943 in order to take charge of the tiling work at a hangar of the Arado airplane works. There were only two tilers imprisoned at Brandenburg-Görden. Thus I became a master tiler earlier than I had thought. In this capacity I had considerable freedom of movement because no guard was able to follow me onto the giddy heights of the roofs, whether at the Brennabor works, the Arado airplane works or the steel-rolling mill at Brandenburg.

In autumn 1943 most of the construction work at the Arado hangar had been completed. So I was sent together with other prisoners from the construction brigade to the Plauer Hof, an agricultural estate on Lake Plau opposite Kirchmöser which belonged to the prison, where I was quartered in an old mill. Again I had tiling work to do. At the Plauer Hof there were Soviet prisoners of war, most of them half-starved. In order to save them from collapse we smuggled bits of bread to them every now and then. We also stole potatoes from potato-clamps on the estate. This had to be done under the eyes of the guards. We had a tar cooker for our roof work. I cooked the potatoes on it and then sent them to the Soviet comrades. We could not do much but at least we did something to counter their hunger and emaciation.

During those weeks, around the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, the Anglo-American bombing raids were stepped up. Bomber formations of a thousand or more planes were flying almost daily, sometimes more than once in the course of a day and night, over Berlin and other cities. Without any military necessity they dropped tens of thousands of high-explosive and incendiary bombs and "blockbusters" on residential areas. Thousands of children, women and old people were killed every day. Armament factories, however, were usually spared.

Our construction brigade was more and more often employed as a bomb disposal unit. When necessary we carried the bombs some distance away, undefused, on our shoulders. We dug out the dead and wounded from caved-in air raid shelters and removed rubble from the streets. When we got caught by a new bomb attack in the process, which happened more and more often, we were detailed to throw incendiary bombs down from roofs where they had landed. I had ended up with a "suicide squad". In retrospect one might say that it was a miracle we stayed alive.

In spring 1944 I was assigned to a labour detail in Berlin as a tiler. There I saw Erich Hanke again with whom I had already worked in the construction brigade from Brandenburg-Görden. He was a bricklayer by trade, and after our liberation from the prison first joined the staff of the Central Secretariat of the SED Executive and then became director of the workers' and peasants' faculty at Berlin's Humboldt University and later a professor at several colleges.

Stationed at first at the young women's prison in the Magdalenenstrasse in Berlin-Lichtenberg, later at the women's prison in Barnimstrasse, we had to carry out repairs of bomb damage to buildings and roofs of Nazi government offices. This gave me even more freedom of movement. Neither the SS overseer Seraphin nor any other officer dared to supervise our work on the roofs, most of which were heavily damaged, whether at the Municipal Court at Elsholzstrasse, at the magistrates' court at Berlin-Schöneberg (which later became the residence of the Allied Control Council), at the Italian embassy in the Tiergarten, at the so-called Academy of German Law immediately opposite the New Reich Chancellery (which on 20 July 1944 was sealed off by the guard battalion of Major Rehmer) or at the People's Court in the Bellevuestrasse.

As we of the labour detail were just about the only males in both the women's prisons—the few male prison officers hid in the air raid shelters during the bombing raids—we were employed for fire fighting and rescue duties. So it was that I chanced to meet a woman supervisor at the Barnimstrasse women's prison who had been conscripted for service there. It turned out that she had been a member of the "Fichte" workers' sports and gymnastics club to which I had also belonged for many years. Not least for this reason she made it possible for us to listen to foreign radio stations like BBC London and Radio Moscow on the wireless during the Anglo-American bombing raids. Thus we got an idea of what was happening at the fronts.

I shall never forget the big raid on Berlin by Anglo-American bombers

■ the end of February 1945 which reduced the whole area between Alexanderplatz and Lichtenberg to rubble. We were working on the roofs of Barnimstrasse women's prison and soon looked like miners coming out of the pit. That afternoon the sun was obscured, the day turned into night, lit only by the many fires. All hell was loose. Time and again incendiary bombs fell on the roofs of the women's prison and we tossed them off. This was not without risk. By that time incendiary bombs had been fitted with time fuses and we never knew when they might explode.

During this bombing raid a cell wing was hit and destroyed. I took the rescue work in hand, trying to get the women out who were trapped in their cells. We took torches, shovels, pick-axes from the prison governor's shelter and rescued the surviving women most of whom were badly injured. For 23 of them help arrived too late.

When in late January and early February 1945 the Red Army reached the Oder river and established bridgeheads on the western bank—we learned about it from the woman supervisor I have mentioned—it was obvious that time had run out for the Nazi régime. But the nearer the inevitable end of their reign of terror approached, the wilder grew the Nazis' excesses. We political prisoners had to reckon with liquidation.

As February 1945 drew to its end Erich Hanke and I considered more and more seriously quitting the labour detail. The decisive news came at last in the form of information that the Prosecutor General at the Municipal Court in Berlin (under whose authority the labour detail came) had requested ■ guarantee from SS supervisor Seraphin about our political reliability in connection with our planned release. Seraphin refused. When Erich Hanke told me about this I knew there was no more time for discussion. We had to get out.

We prepared our escape carefully and waited for a favourable opportunity. We decided to stay with the work-unit as long as possible in order to reduce the time-span until the arrival of the Red Army to a minimum. During the first days of March there were increasing signs that Seraphin wanted to send us off on a transport in order to get rid of us ■ witnesses of his inhuman behaviour towards prisoners. Where this transport would go we could only guess at the time. I remembered only too well the threat by the Gestapo men immediately after my trial. The "reunion" they had promised me after my release was something I wanted to avoid under all circumstances. We had to act. This had become all the more urgent since we had been warned by the women prisoners' supervisor that the Gestapo

was planning to liquidate the political prisoners. I had confirmation of this only after the liberation. In February 1945 the Gestapo had issued orders that all political prisoners from Berlin were to be put on barges which were to be scuttled on the Havel lakes around Berlin together with their living cargo.

We were again working at the young women's prison in Magdalenenstrasse. The previous day an escape attempt via the cellar had failed due to an accident. In the late forenoon of 6 March 1945, however, we managed to climb from the prison roof on which I was working via the lightning conductor on to the roof of a neighbouring house, a typical Berlin tenement building, and from there into the attic and thence to the stairwell. The risk of being discovered from the prison yard or from the street was considerable. It was even riskier to get to Frankfurter Allee via Alfredstrasse and Wagnerplatz in our black prison uniform with its broad yellow stripes down the trouser seams and on the sleeves. The only "camouflage", if one can call it that, was a bricklayer's basket and hammer, a long chisel, and a long piece of rope.

When we turned into Frankfurter Allee there were hundreds of policemen and soldiers busy clearing away rubble from the latest heavy bombing raid. It was too late to turn back. But apparently nobody got suspicious. We reached Siegfriedstrasse near Berlin-Lichtenberg railway station. From there we wanted to go to an uncle of Erich Hanke in the Wotanstrasse, but he was not at home. Nearby there was a bombed-out house in the air raid shelter of which we got rid of the eye-catching stripes on our prison clothes. Now we looked like foreign workers.

We continued our search for relatives or friends of Erich Hanke through what is now the Josef-Orlopp-Strasse, the Müllendorfstrasse (now Jacques-Duclos-Strasse in Berlin-Lichtenberg) and the Gürtelstrasse in Berlin-Friedrichshain. Either the houses in which they had lived had been destroyed or we found nobody there. There was no choice but to spend our first night of freedom in the basement of a burnt-out house at Belle-Alliance-Platz in Berlin-Neukölln.

The next morning our search for shelter was no more successful. We looked up three addresses in the Friedrichstrasse but this did not help either because the houses were bombed-out. Our situation became more difficult. We had to expect police round-ups or random controls any time. Without identity papers and without money we could use neither subway nor tram nor bus, all of which were very closely watched. Besides, public transport was frequently put out of operation by bombing raids.

In March 1945 Berlin had been turned into a fortress. Anti-tank obstacles and barricades were erected at all important intersections and in the main thoroughfares, tanks and guns were dug in. Hitler, Himmler, Bormann and Goebbels had issued orders that every street, every house, every dwelling was to be defended "to the last". Expecting a new Red Army offensive, they had concentrated élite units from the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS around their last hide-out at the Reich Chancellery. Gestapo, SS and military police were chasing deserters, escaped prisoners of war and forced labourers.

In view of all this we were more than happy, after hours of wandering about in Berlin-Neukölln on 7 March 1945 to find at last a woman comrade at her flat whom I had known before. She was the wife of Alfred Perl about whom I shall have more to say later. Even though she exposed herself to great danger she helped us. We could stay overnight at her place and she prepared a soup from the little she received on her food rations, our first hot meal in two days. During an air raid alarm we could not afford to use the house's air raid shelter. But this time the bombs fell on another part of Berlin.

Despite all her efforts the woman comrade had been unable to find us a safe shelter by next morning. She could only give me a suit that almost fitted. Erich Hanke and I left early for Berlin-Schöneberg. But we achieved nothing there; the houses had also been destroyed. We had no choice but to try one of our last few addresses at Bülow-Platz (now Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) in the centre of Berlin. This would have meant three to four hours' walk but we were tired of walking. As my Neukölln woman comrade had given us some money we risked a trip on the S-Bahn from Bahnhof Zoo to Bahnhof Alexanderplatz.

We arrived there without incident. But my friends were not at home. After hours of waiting we decided to look for yet another of Erich Hanke's uncles in the Oderberger Strasse. He was at home but we could not tell him and his wife the whole truth if we wanted to have a roof over our heads for the coming night. The next morning we decided to search separately for safe shelter and contact with the party. At the same time we agreed to meet on one of the following days. A bombing raid just at the appointed time made the meeting impossible and for the time being we lost contact.

As I found out later, Erich Hanke was lucky whereas I was not—even though for a little while I found shelter with old Mrs Grund at 37 Landsberger Strasse, 100 yards as the crow flies from the Barnimstrasse women's prison. Her daughter had been conscripted for auxiliary war

service. In order not to expose myself and others to danger I could not go to the house's air raid shelter during air raids. So I went either to the underground station at Alexanderplatz or stayed in the first floor backyard flat. Frequently shattered window panes did not at all diminish the feeling of relative security which not only I, but all those who had been affected no worse by the bombing raids had.

It became dangerous when the front part of the house was reduced to rubble during the last big raid by Anglo-American bombers on Berlin on 18 March 1945. This raid actually caused the most extensive destruction and claimed the largest number of victims. This made my stay at Landsberger Strasse extremely difficult. Immediate danger was caused by an unannounced surprise visit my friends had in mid-April 1945. This created an extremely difficult situation for them as well as for me. There was nowhere to go but back to the labour detail at the Barnimstrasse women's prison if I was not to fall into the hands of the Gestapo at the last moment.

My return to the labour detail had been so diligently organised by my friends that the acting Prosecutor General at the Municipal Court in Berlin, who had me brought before him and who a few weeks earlier had praised me in connection with the rescue operation at the Barnimstrasse women's prison, now, by arrangement, pronounced himself in my favour and against the supervisor Seraphin.

So I was lucky amidst misfortune. Was it due to the unceasing bombing raids which had caused havoc in the Nazi government offices? To the gradual collapse of the Nazi régime? To the eagerness on the part of Nazi officials not to incriminate themselves still further just before the curtain came down or to save themselves trouble with the Gestapo on account of our successful escape and their insufficient supervision? Or was it the fact that my release from prison had already been ordered that let me get away so lightly? I am sure that all these factors contributed but most of all the first one.

Only many years later when reading my prison file did I find out that the governor of Brandenburg-Görden had informed the Reich Prosecutor at the People's Court on 14 March 1945 of my escape from the young women's prison at Berlin-Lichtenberg. Several days passed before the report was registered and processed at the Reich Prosecutor's office on 19 March 1945. On 21 March 1945 a handwritten report on my escape on 6 March 1945 went to the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin's Prinz-Albrecht-

Strasse and to the president of the Berlin police and a request for an arrest warrant was prepared. A further two days elapsed before this was typed and sent off. The request for an arrest warrant and the registration of my name in the wanted persons file reached the addresses on 7 April 1945 at the earliest. However, ■■ can be seen from a note dated 9 April 1945, the file had been destroyed in a bombing raid on 3 February 1945 and a new one had not yet been supplied. Therefore, re-submission of the warrant within four weeks was requested. But four weeks later, on 9 May 1945, there was no longer a file to be submitted. For by that time the Nazi Reich had ceased to exist. It was my luck that during the last four weeks of the war the Nazi police apparatus had in fact completely collapsed.

On 4 May 1945 I was back at 37 Landsberger Strasse in the building where I had found shelter earlier on or rather, as Wera Küchenmeister describes it, “in what ■■■ left of the musty tenement, within walls precariously held together, behind mountains of cracked, smoke-blackened stones”. She visualises me “sitting on the window-sill in the kitchen boarding up with quick, skilful hands the hole where there had been a window. He looks very thin but most people I know are thin at this time. The face with its sharp features is clear and open. His eyes are bright, they look friendly and probing at the 16-year-old girl who stands there quietly watching him at his work . . . Only years later am I beginning to realise what was characteristic about this first encounter.”

In mid-April 1945 I had experienced the agony of the Nazi régime at close quarters when I was with the work-unit at the Barnimstrasse women’s prison. On 16 April 1945 the Red Army had started its assault on Berlin from its bridgeheads on the Oder river. As I later read in the memoirs of Soviet military men, on 20 April, Hitler’s birthday, the long-range artillery of the LXXIX Infantry Corps of the 3rd Assault Army and the first battery of the Guards Artillery Brigade of the 47th Army fired their first salvos into Berlin. I shall never forget the midday hours of this last “Führer’s birthday”. The first Soviet artillery shell landed right opposite the Barnimstrasse women’s prison, the second one immediately beside the prison where we were held. The next hits were already in the city centre. Obviously the Soviet artillery was ranging on the Reich Chancellery, the last refuge of the big Nazis.

When the first Red Army tanks reached the northeastern outskirts of Berlin near Blumberg on 21 April 1945 the Nazi guards at Barnimstrasse women’s prison lost their nerve completely. Regardless of artillery fire and

bombing raids we were driven in a forced march to the prison at Berlin-Plötzensee. During this march I saw for the first time Soviet Yak fighter planes; it was a sight that lifted up my heart. They were after all the heralds of imminent liberation.

At Berlin-Plötzensee we were loaded onto trucks and driven in the direction of Brandenburg. But soon we had to continue on foot for the last part of the journey. We arrived at the prison before the Red Army closed its ring around Berlin on 25 April 1945.



Red Army soldiers hoist the red flag
of victory and liberation over the Reichstag building in Berlin,
30 April 1945.

IX

Days and hours of liberation

I met many of my comrades-in-arms again at Brandenburg-Görden, among them Kurt Seibt, the party leadership's representative on our cell wing, and Alfred Perl, its representative in Block No. 2. Others, however, were no longer alive. Many of them had been dragged to the guillotine during the last few weeks and days. The last mass execution took place on 20 April 1945. Other comrades, like Max Maddalena, had succumbed to illness caused by inhuman prison conditions. Permanent hunger had destroyed their physical resistance.

But the days of the appalling Nazi régime were numbered, and the hour of our liberation drew nearer. Joyful excitement grew amongst us political prisoners at the irresistible advance of the Red Army. At the same time we were observing the activities of the prison authorities and the guards intently and not without anxiety. It was quite possible that our tormentors would stage a bloodbath amongst the political prisoners at the last moment.

The guards grew noticeably more nervous and uncertain; the most brutal amongst them began to take to their heels; others became more moderate in their language and behaviour; some tacitly tolerated the fact that we ignored the prison rules more and more. It was obvious that by their more conciliatory attitude they were hoping to see themselves past the inevitable

end of Nazism and insure themselves against the future. We encouraged these hopes. We told the guards in as many words: "If nothing happens to us, nothing will happen to you." At the same time the party organisation was doing everything possible in the circumstances to prepare the defence and liberation of the political prisoners. We thus succeeded in setting up a prisoners' committee and appointing spokesmen for the individual blocks and cell wings. The administration of the institution, while not expressly permitting this, tolerated it. They also accepted during the last days of April that the cell doors of the political prisoners were no longer locked. Nevertheless we had experienced too often how incalculable the Nazis were. Extreme caution therefore was still called for, the more so as we were suddenly locked up again.

During those days when the inhuman prison régime was gradually collapsing I was again called to the office of the SS governor of the prison, Thuemmler. But this time there was no Gestapo man present. Mr Thuemmler was busy with other matters and in a great hurry. At Genthin the Wehrmacht was still holding a bridgehead to permit the escape to the west across the Elbe river. Brandenburg town was still occupied by some *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen SS* units. In the circumstances Thuemmler thought it advisable to delay for a few days the execution of the instruction issued by the Prosecutor General at the Municipal Court in Berlin to hand over to me the official documents for my release. The situation around the prison, he explained, was still too unclear.

A few days later the situation had become clear but in a way rather different from what the prison governor had in mind. He had probably still counted on a breakthrough by the "last ditch" army of General Wenck. In addition he had made great efforts to bring SS units to Brandenburg-Görden and have the political prisoners liquidated. But this scheme had misfired.

At last the longed-for day of liberation for myself and my comrades arrived. In the morning of 27 April 1945 Alfred Perl opened my cell door. The party leadership had started the liberation of the political prisoners after the prison administration and with it a large number of guards had fled to the west. Incidentally, a few years later Thuemmler was appointed director of Celle prison—which throws an interesting light on how the Nazi past was dealt with in the western part of Germany.

I went to the main gate. The guards had already been disarmed. A short while later the first Soviet tank arrived at the prison gate. The excitement

with which we embraced the Soviet soldiers remains unforgettable. I do not think one of us, including myself, was ashamed of the tears of joy when we greeted the Red Army men who had come as liberators, class brothers and friends, as pioneers for a new and better future for mankind. It will also remain for ever unforgettable what enormous efforts, what immeasurable sacrifices the Soviet people under the leadership of Lenin's party had made for the liberation of mankind from fascism.

On this memorable day I saw Wilhelm Thiele, my cell mate from 1941 to 1943, and many other comrades-in-arms again. Wilhelm Thiele took a decisive part in our liberation and was in charge of military security at the prison on 27 April 1945 until the Red Army arrived.

We had a lot to tell each other from the last two years. Our thoughts and talks were directed to the future. The question that occupied our minds particularly was: What had to be done immediately to destroy fascism at its socio-economic, political and intellectual roots, to remove the material and spiritual débris left behind by fascist rule and war, and to secure the existence of our people?

There was only one answer: community of action by all parties and organisations of the working class, a broad-based alliance with all antifascist forces, with all who were willing to draw the consequences from the disastrous past of the German people. This was dictated by the experiences of our long, difficult and costly battle against fascism and war. For us the unity of the working people, and of all antifascist and democratic forces, was not a question of selfish party tactics. We were not trying, as bourgeois historians and publicists have claimed time and again, to secure a majority in future class struggles and elections for the KPD which had been weakened by the Nazi terror. Rather we had realised that this unity was a necessity for our people as dictated by history itself. For—and this was another topic we discussed that night—the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship and subsequently the unleashing of bloody wars of annexation and destruction against almost all European nations had been possible only because the German working class and the other democratic forces of our people had been split into hostile camps. The various political and ideological tendencies in our country had opposed one another instead of moving jointly against fascism and reaction. Ever to forget this would mean to forget the enormous sacrifices of the resistance against Nazism and war—the greatest having been made by my party, the KPD—and to forget the legacy of the victims.

We were inspired by the resolve to make use of the historic opportunity

created by the liberation from fascism for the benefit of the people. Never again would war be allowed to emanate from German soil. As probably everybody in the liberated prisons and concentration camps, we at Brandenburg vowed to do everything to create the antifascist unity of our people. We vowed to eradicate fascism and militarism, to create a new antifascist democratic state and to guide social development along socialist lines.

I was keen to get to Berlin as soon as possible, to look up friends and comrades there and to take part in the party's struggle. So I gave notice of my departure to the Soviet officer in charge of the security of the liberated political prisoners and ~~set~~ off together with Alfred Perl on 28 April 1945. I first fetched my personal belongings and said good-bye to Wilhelm Thiele. "When we parted," he remembered later, "we had just taken our clothes bags from the store-room. Then I remembered that I had been sent to prison without an overcoat. When Erich heard about this he took a beautiful, almost new overcoat out of his clothes bag and—helpful as he always was—gave it to me. Unfortunately, immediately after this we had to evacuate the building because it was about to come under Nazi fire and my clothes bag with the beautiful overcoat disappeared in the ensuing confusion."

To get to Berlin during the last days of April 1945, when heavy fighting was still going on in the city centre, was not easy and certainly not without danger. Alfred Perl and I had a long and tiring march before us because all public transport was suspended. To reach our destination by a direct route was impossible. There were still some isolated units of the *Wehrmacht* and the *Waffen SS* between Brandenburg and Berlin who were trying to get through to the Elbe. There were also *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen SS* units, mostly "guards" for leading figures of the Nazi régime who were attempting to break through the encirclement of Berlin by the Red Army so as to get to the West and gain the protection of the US Army. It would have meant suicide to run into any of these fanatical "last ditch" Nazis. They would have given us short shrift. We therefore had to change our direction time and again and finally reached the vicinity of Oranienburg near Berlin via Plauen.

On our way we came across deserted, partly destroyed villages and settlements, blown-up bridges and railway lines, bombed-out and shelled factories, ownerless cattle, sometimes also frightened, distrustful or apathetic people. In view of all this I kept asking myself how much time and strength it would take to overcome these disastrous consequences of the war which now had returned whence it had come. Above all: with whom could we achieve this?

In the areas which we passed through during those last days of April 1945 units of the Red Army were mopping up the last pockets of resistance of the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen SS*. At the time the Red Army was arresting all males between 14 and 70 years of age regardless of whether they wore uniforms or civilian clothes. They could not tell of anyone who came their way whether he was friend or foe, Nazi or Communist, someone exempt from military service or a soldier who was fed up with the war and wanted to go home.

Late in the night of 28 April 1945 Alfred Perl and I were wandering about, rather lost, in a wooded area near Oranienburg. Suddenly we heard voices, and I expected Soviet soldiers. My attempt to make contact in Russian was successful. I explained to the Red Army men that we had been political prisoners at Brandenburg-Görden and had been liberated the previous day. But the certificate which said that I had been "unworthy of military service and rejected by the *Wehrmacht*", the only document I carried with me, did not convince them. This was no surprise in those days. After all, many heavily implicated Nazis were trying all manner of means to "go underground". Thus my paper just could not be accepted as a sufficient credential by the Soviet comrades.

Alfred Perl and I spent the night of 28/29 April 1945 in ■ barn together with others who had been picked up. Among them were *Wehrmacht* deserters, SS men and officials of the Nazi régime as well as people who had been brought to Germany as slave workers. The next morning we succeeded in having our identity and our comings and goings clarified with the help of a female Soviet interpreter. This happened in front of the house where at the same time Konrad Wolf, son of the well-known German Communist, poet and physician Friedrich Wolf, then a lieutenant in the Red Army and now president of the Academy of Arts in the GDR, was staying. But chance would have it that we should meet only many years later.

On 29 April 1945 I was assigned to the Komsomol secretary of a Soviet unit as an adviser. In his company I made my way into the vicinity of Bernau. From there I proceeded into destroyed Berlin on 4 May 1945. The city had experienced more than 400 Anglo-American bombing raids, more than 40 of them very heavy ones, up to March/April 1945. In the course of these 37 out of every 100 homes had been destroyed (the average for all of Germany was 21 in every 100). Of the 400 million cubic metres of rubble in Germany 55 million were in Berlin. The Anglo-American air war had claimed about 500,000 lives among the civilian population, including more than 100,000 children.

When at last on 4 May 1945 I reached Berlin's city centre via Pankow and Weissensee I saw terrible devastation everywhere. The few undamaged houses were showing white flags made from bed linen.

Two days later the Soviet garrison headquarters issued an order to decorate the streets and houses with the flags of the four Allied powers on the occasion of the signing of the unconditional surrender of the Hitler régime on 8 May 1945. This order was carried out on 6 and 7 May 1945.

It was a great joy to find my friends at 37 Landsberger Strasse unharmed. For the next few weeks and months I again found shelter with them. With the help of comrades I immediately started gathering together members of the KPD and KJVD in Berlin-Friedrichshain. For this purpose we opened in a pub in Landsberger Strasse an office which I ran. First contacts with the Soviet district headquarters at Berlin-Friedrichshain got me to the Berlin city headquarters of the Red Army at Berlin-Alt-Friedrichsfelde around 10 May 1945. There I met Richard Gyptner and Hans Mahle, previously a KJVD activist and now chief editor of *Die Wahrheit*, the official newspaper of the Socialist Unity Party of West Berlin. Both of them were members of the special commission of the KPD's Central Committee (ZK); they took me to 80 Prinzenstrasse, now 41 Einbecker Strasse, the provisional headquarters of the KPD's Central Committee.

There I was summoned to see Walter Ulbricht who had been instructed by the Secretariat of the ZK to organise the first steps towards normalisation of life in the capital, the establishment of antifascist democratic institutions and the preparations for the party to resume at last its legal activity. This was our first encounter and I was impressed by the energy with which he mastered this formidable task. After giving me information about the situation he put me in charge of working out a framework for the KPD's youth work during the next weeks and months. He already had a draft which Wolfgang Leonhard—then a member of the ZK's commission but later a defector and rabid slanderer of the SED and the GDR—had worked out. This bore the laconic note in Walter Ulbricht's hand: "Useless."

During those days I saw Otto Winzer again, for the first time in 11 years; he was also a member of the ZK commission. He was made chief of the education authority at the democratic Municipal Council for Greater Berlin.

In late May/early June 1945 I met Erich Mielke for the first time who had been fighting against fascism and war for many years in the ranks of the KJVD and KPD—also in the International Brigades in Spain—and is now

■ member of the SED Politbureau, a four-star general and minister for state security. I also met Lotte Kühn, later the wife of Walter Ulbricht, and Grete Keilson. Both were on the staff of the KPD's ZK.

I got down to work at once. I could draw on my experience in youth work as a member of the KJVD's ZK, as political chief of the KJVD for the Saarland, Ruhr area and Berlin-Brandenburg districts and as a representative for the districts of Hesse, Pfalz, Baden and Württemberg. But the sheer scope and complexity of the task with which I had now been entrusted in ■ completely different situation was only to dawn on me during the following weeks and months.

The first and most important thing was to create a united antifascist democratic youth movement. Previous activists and members of the KJVD had to be found and put to work. At the same time contacts with former activists of the Socialist Workers' Youth and the Catholic and Protestant youth had to be established. They had to be won over so that we could enter into cooperation with them on a basis of trust.

But it was also important to us to rally those young people who had learned from the bitter experience of the past. This was more easily said than done. They were young people, aged 14 to 21, most of whom had been forcibly recruited into the "Hitler Youth" and the "German Girls' Federation", the Nazi youth organisations. They had grown up under the power and influence of fascism, which had formed them, led them astray, and abused their trust. The Nazi ideology continued to operate on them. Many of them reacted with despair and resignation to the collapse of their supposed ideals. They were in the grip of hopelessness. All this made it extremely difficult to win these young people over for democratic reconstruction. Hunger and homelessness, unemployment, illness and epidemics made things even more difficult. Most of them faced the new situation with reserve, rejection or even hostility.

On the other hand, many of these boys and girls, because they had experienced the whole brutality of the Nazi régime during its last days and hours, took their first step towards making ■ break with the past. Out of their inner decency and their love for their homeland they joined those ready to undertake the work of reconstruction. They helped clear rubble, assisted their elders in getting the water, electricity and gas supply working again, in restoring traffic, in short in all the work leading up to the revival of their stricken native city. Nimble messenger boys substituted for telephones between the germ cells of the new administration. Young girls sat down

behind typewriters. Boys and girls formed unloading brigades for the Red Army lorries which carried potatoes and flour for the people of Berlin.

The first few weeks after liberation from Nazism provided a fundamental experience. It was all-important to show to all the youngsters, regardless of their social background, their political and ideological standpoint, a road into the future. They needed the confidence to give a new meaning, a new purpose to their lives by actively participating in the victory over fascism and militarism. All young people needed to feel that their interest in the future bound them together and that this common interest was stronger than anything that stood between them. Just as this required a firm faith in youth, so it demanded that the confidence of youth be won. Confidence as the basis for lasting cooperation could only be achieved by complete personal commitment; by understanding, patience and perseverance.

These were my guiding thoughts when in May 1945, together with my comrades, I started building a united antifascist democratic youth movement. It comprised young people from all classes, all walks of life, and all political and ideological persuasions.

Early in June 1945 I was again called to see Walter Ulbricht. He introduced me to Heinz Kessler, for many years a member of the SED's ZK and deputy minister for defence in the GDR, who had returned to Berlin from Moscow at the end of May 1945. Heinz Kessler, the son of a working-class family, had joined the Red Army soon after Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union. Since 1943 he had taken part in the battle against the fascist aggressors as a member and frontline delegate of the "Free Germany National Committee" (NKFD) for a peace-loving democratic German state. Ever since our first encounter in June 1945 he and I have been close friends. This friendship is rooted not only in our shared political and ideological convictions and our many years of work together in the youth federation, but also in his open companionable nature.

Walter Ulbricht ordered us to prepare the formation of antifascist youth committees. Heinz Kessler was given responsibility for the youth work in Berlin whereas I, being youth secretary with the KPD's ZK, was to organise youth work throughout the country. During the following days we looked for more former KJVD activists. We also made contact with former activists and members of the Social Democratic and Socialist youth associations, like Edith Baumann and Theo Wiechert, as well as with antifascist youths with religious affiliations. Simultaneously we began to include young people who had belonged to Nazi youth organisations. We wanted to win all of them

for a unified antifascist youth movement and to secure the broadest possible basis from the beginning.

We took to heart the lessons the KPD had learned during the years of Nazi dictatorship, particularly at the party conferences of 1935 and 1939: the split in the German workers' movement had to be overcome simultaneously with the split in the working-class youth movement, and the splintering of German youth in general into associations, federations and groups. The KPD had no doubts that the German people could only be led out of the catastrophe caused by fascism if the working class acted in unison and forged a firm alliance of all antifascist democratic forces.

Hitler's régime had left a terrible legacy. Six million Germans had paid with their lives for his plans of world domination. Millions of German soldiers were in captivity. Millions of refugees were trudging along country roads in search of shelter. There was hardly a family that had escaped the effects of Nazi rule and war unscathed. Out of every 100 persons 40 had lost nearly all their possessions and 25 a part thereof. Factories, electricity and water works had been destroyed or severely damaged, most transport and communication networks were disrupted. In agriculture the effects of the war had led to a crucial slump in crops and livestock herds. Material losses of the German people were estimated at 200,000 million marks. Compared to 1936, the national wealth had dropped by one third, the physical labour potential by between 15 and 20 per cent. Many educational and research establishments had been reduced to rubble. Irreplaceable art treasures and other items of cultural and historical value had been lost to the German people and to mankind for ever. Most people were living just from one day to the next. Their thoughts revolved around a piece of bread and a roof over their heads.

In this situation the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD), whose chief was then Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov, issued its historic Order No. 2 on 10 June 1945, permitting the activity of anti-fascist democratic parties and free trade unions. The first party to present itself publicly was the KPD. Its Central Committee issued a manifesto to the working population all over the country on 11 June 1945. With this fundamental Marxist-Leninist document, as I wrote in retrospect in an article entitled "On a sure course" on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the SED in the latter's official daily *Neues Deutschland* in March 1976, the party "set the goal and pointed the way for all antifascist democratic forces as to how to overcome the rule of monopoly capital,

which launched two devastating world wars, hoisted fascism into the saddle and was chiefly responsible for its atrocities. In this important document the KPD drew the lessons of history and aimed at creating anti-imperialist democratic conditions with the possibility of opening to the German people the road to socialism."

As Communists we proceeded from the conviction that only socialism could finally solve the social and national problems. But we also recognised that in the situation then existing in Germany there was no basis for implementing socialism immediately. Therefore, the KPD considered it its immediate aim to establish an antifascist democratic régime, a democratic parliamentary republic with all democratic rights and freedoms for the people.

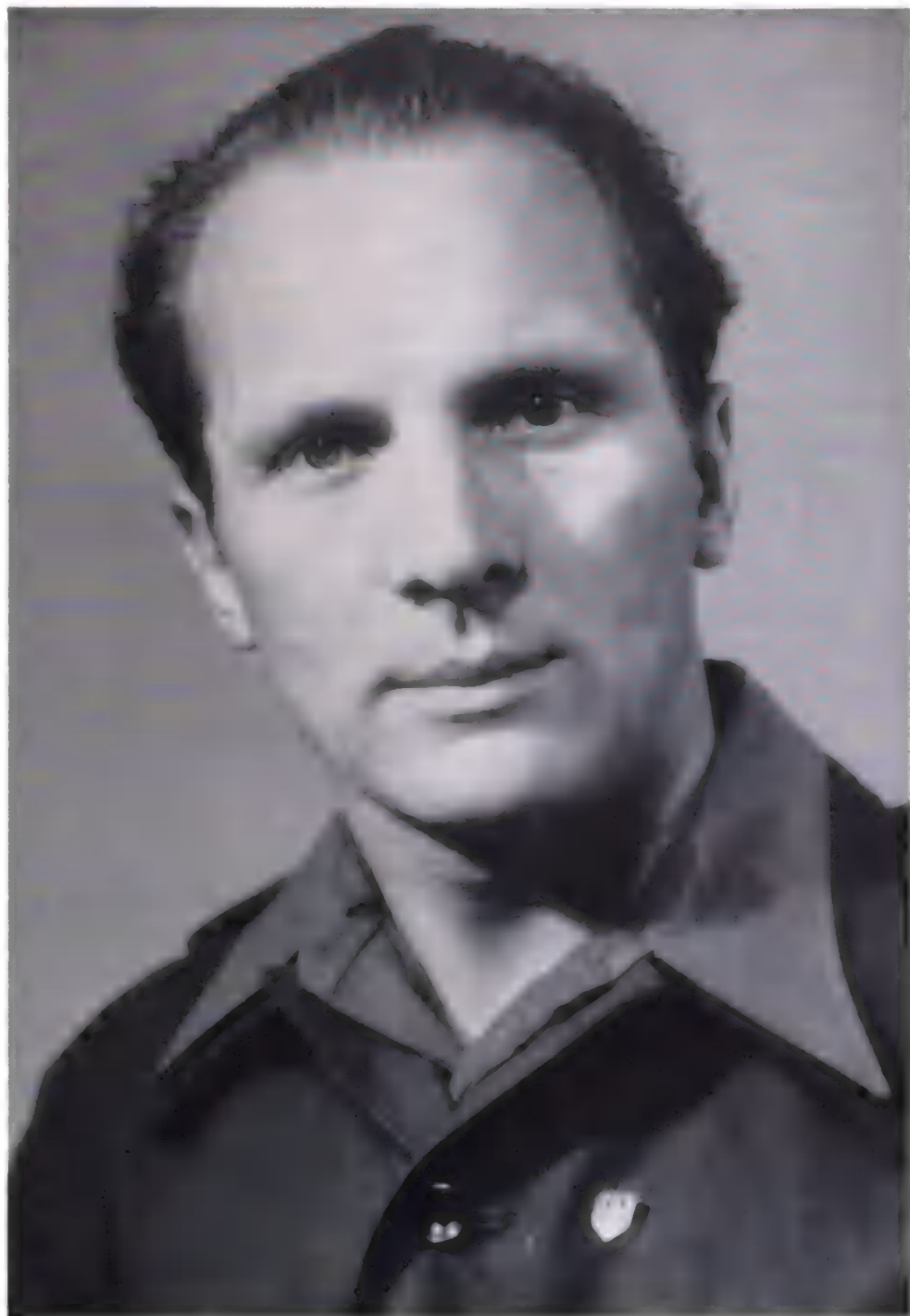
The solution to the most urgent problems which the manifesto proposed were in the most fundamental interests of German youth. The vestiges of Hitler's régime were to be destroyed completely, the Nazi and war criminals to be severely punished and all their assets handed over to the people. The manifesto provided for all active Nazis to be removed from public office and for the establishment of a democratic administration. This included democratic renewal of the judicial system as well as antifascist reformation in the fields of education, cultural and intellectual life. The fundamental democratic rights and liberties of the working people were to be guaranteed and secured and efforts directed towards peaceful cooperation with all nations.

At first the number of antifascist youths was still small. The manifesto of 11 June 1945 gave them clear directions for their work among the young generation. On this basis we demanded that the youth committees which had already been established in Berlin and other cities or were about to be set up as proposed by the KPD, SPD and other antifascist forces, should draw more and more young people into the process of building a new life.

On 12 June 1945, as suggested by the KPD, about 200 antifascist activists of the most varied political and ideological persuasions assembled in the Neues Stadthaus at Berlin's Parochialstrasse. Amongst them were Otto Brass and Max Fechner of the SPD, Hermann Schlimme, Bernhard Göring, Roman Chwalek, Jakob Kaiser and Ernst Lemmer from various former trade unions, Dr Vockel from the former Centre party and the priests Peter Buchholz and Heinrich Grüber as well as Walter Ulbricht, Ottomar Geschke, Johannes R. Becher, Hans Jendretzky and Otto Winzer of the KPD. Representing youth at this assembly were Heinz Kessler and myself.

Walter Ulbricht explained the Central Committee's manifesto. On its behalf he proposed to form an antifascist democratic bloc.

In our youth work we were able to build on the action programme which the central committees of the KPD and SPD had agreed upon between themselves on 19 June 1945. In this connection the two parties had also agreed to refrain from setting up their own youth organisations. The action committees of both parties which had sprung up from the active partnership between the KPD and SPD in the provinces, districts, towns and villages of the Soviet zone of occupation considerably facilitated and furthered our efforts to bring all young people together. The recently achieved unity of action between the two workers' parties was also bearing fruit in the field of youth work.



As Chairman of the Free German Youth, 1953.

X

Symbol of the rising sun

On 26 February 1946, Theo Wiechert, Paul Verner, myself and other members of the Central Antifascist Youth Committee including Edith Baumann, the Protestant pastor Oswald Hanisch, Heinz Kessler, the Catholic curate Robert Lange and Rudolf Miessner, signed a petition to the SMAD requesting permission to found a democratic youth organization to be called "Free German Youth" (FDJ). Its emblem was to be the rising sun against a blue background. This was to symbolise that after the pitchdark night of fascism a new day was dawning for the German youth which had united and organised itself under this symbol. It was to be a future that would never be darkened by the baneful shadows of the past but, like the rising sun, would shine brightly from a cloudless sky. It was to be beautiful through the unanimous action of the young people, the thoroughgoing settling of accounts with the terrible past, the recognition of their own strength.

When a little later, on 7 March 1946, the SMAD approved the establishment of the Free German Youth, this marked the foundation of the first unified democratic youth organisation in German history. On that day I was filled with a powerful emotion. I was deeply convinced that now all that we had fought for during the years of the Weimar Republic and during the period of Nazi rule was becoming reality.

I had longed for this day during nine long years in prison. Now, former members of the KJVD, the SAJ, young trade unionists as well as former members of the Protestant and Catholic youth federations, in other words young people from all classes and sections of society united in the Free German Youth. To me the foundation of the Free German Youth marked the peak of my political activities to date, one of the most important achievements in the construction of a new democratic German state during the eleven months since our liberation in April/May 1945.

There are many days in my life which I shall not forget. One of them is 2 July 1945. I found myself at the time in an unassuming house at 41 Einbecker Strasse in the eastern part of Berlin. On the outside, nothing distinguished it from the other buildings in the neighbourhood. There was no sign or notice to indicate that here were working those men and women whose constructive will was stronger than the difficulties they faced.

It was about midday and nothing indicated that the day would not take its expected course. For weeks I had been working with my young friends to gather together those amongst the young who had learned from the past. This was not easy, and I was just pondering some problems which we had to solve when the door opened and a man entered whose name was a symbol of faith, confidence and progress: Wilhelm Pieck. At the KPD's Brussels conference he had been elected chairman of the party for as long as Ernst Thälmann was imprisoned, and he had returned after long years of exile from Moscow to Berlin on the evening of 1 July 1945. There he stood before me, broad and stocky, grey-haired, with intelligent and friendly eyes beneath the bushy eyebrows.

Of my feelings at that moment I wrote a few months later: "I was filled with joyful excitement that suddenly I was facing a man who epitomised the best traditions of the German workers' movement. A handshake and an exchange of question and answer. Did I find the right answer? I do not know. What I did know and knew at once was that in the bosom of this man beats a warm heart for Germany; he has only one concern: the present and future of the German people and their youth. Another handshake and the order to report on the situation of the German youth at 3 p. m. After that I was alone with my thoughts and feelings and with the certainty that in Wilhelm Pieck the young generation had their best friend and helper.

Wilhelm Pieck was in the Secretariat of the KPD's ZK among other things responsible for the youth work and in charge of the youth commission. Since I had been given the function of youth secretary of the Central Committee

in early July 1945, I was working directly with him during the following weeks, months and years. He was always ■ fatherly friend and an example. I also saw Anton Ackermann and Franz Dahlem, both members of the Secretariat of the ZK, as well as Bruno Leuschner, chief of the economic policy department and Fred Oelssner, chief of the agitation and propaganda department, during those days. Working together with them I came to know them and appreciate them still more.

I also met Heinz Hoffmann again at 76-79 Wallstrasse in Berlin-Mitte whither the KPD's Central Committee had moved its headquarters, the building which is now occupied by the Dietz publishing house. I had first met him at Mannheim in 1934 during our joint antifascist activity in the KJVD. Later on he took part in the national revolutionary liberation war of the Spanish people as a member of the International Brigades. Now he was on the staff of the KPD's Central Committee.

In the middle of July 1945 I took part in the first big antifascist youth rally. It was opened by Heinz Kessler, the chairman of Berlin's main youth committee, with words commemorating the resistance fighters who had given their lives during the Nazi period. Honouring the victims of fascism and fulfilling the legacy they had left us has always remained a matter of the deepest concern to myself, my friends and comrades-in-arms.

At the time there were already 21 antifascist youth committees at work in Berlin. Such committees had also sprung up in other towns in the Soviet zone of occupation. I wrote about their activities in the *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, the official paper of the KPD, on 7 July 1945, saying that a free and united German youth movement must be the desire and aim of all those who had the future of our people at heart. The basis of the movement were the youth committees at the local administration level. In them young Christians, socialists, democrats and communists joined together to work with the young people who had sincerely broken with the Hitler Youth and its evil creed. Our activity in the youth committees was supported by the SMAD which advised on 31 July 1945 that the formation of antifascist youth committees was permitted in large and medium-size towns in the Soviet zone of occupation. The announcement in the SMAD's newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau* said about their tasks and goals:

"Great responsibility for the education of the German youth has been confided to the youth committees. Their task is to reawaken in the German youth the sense of what is just and what is unjust, which sense the Nazis had killed, just as they had destroyed the capacity to distinguish between

truth and lies, between morality and crime; to remove the Nazi ideology from their minds and to educate the young people to become decent-minded individuals so that they would cooperate with youthful enthusiasm in the great work of the antifascist democratic renewal of Germany." This decision, with which the USSR once more demonstrated its attitude towards the work of the German people's antifascist forces, coincided with the stipulations of the anti-Hitler coalition concerning the future of Germany. It conformed to the internationally binding measures for the demilitarisation, democratisation and denazification of Germany taken at the Potsdam conference by the leaders of the USSR, USA and UK in summer 1945.

After the approval of antifascist youth committees in the Soviet zone of occupation and the clear direction given for their activities, we accelerated our efforts to create further youth committees and to enhance the work of existing ones. In this connection I met at the beginning of August 1945 Hermann Axen who had languished for many years in concentration camps on account of his antifascist fight in the ranks of the KJVD and had, after the liberation, worked for the Leipzig district committee of the KPD; he has now for many years been a member of the Politbureau and the Secretariat of the SED's ZK. As he remembered later, it was not easy to get to Berlin's city centre and to find the department of youth of the ZK in the Wallstrasse building which had been damaged by incendiary bombs. It was located on the top floor of the house. This was not surprising but rather a tradition. In the Karl-Liebknecht-Haus of the KPD's ZK at the then Bülowplatz, now Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, the youth had been quartered right under the roof in 1933. But Hermann Axen had not imagined that it would be directly under a completely burnt-out roof.

"After the first words of greeting," he writes, "Erich came right to the heart of the matter. He did not start with recommendations but asked dozens of major and minor questions; about the party, the situation of the youth, the activity of the embryonic youth committee of our town. He commented on every problem and explained points of principle with reference to practical examples. He voiced his appreciation of our initiatives for the mobilisation of young voluntary workers at the lignite works at Espenhain and passed on to me his experiences in Berlin and other provinces of the Soviet zone of occupation. Then Erich asked: Can you sit down behind the typewriter and write a short article about our activity in Leipzig for the first issue of the first antifascist youth journal *Neues Leben*? Typed with four fingers, the product met with Erich's approval."

In our efforts towards the integration of the young people from all classes and walks of life, and of all political and ideological persuasions, we were doubtlessly helped by the fact that on 14 July 1945 the KPD, SPD, CDU and LDPD had formed an antifascist democratic bloc. They declared as their common goal the complete victory over fascism, the reconstruction of the country on an antifascist democratic basis and the establishment of friendly relations with all nations.

Members of the youth committees took part in all the measures for the democratic renewal of life. They helped to bring in the first post-war harvest and to get factories going again; they took part in the establishment of democratic administrations and in the democratic land reform introduced in September 1945 and the democratic school reform.

This multifaceted activity of the youth committees demanded more and more urgently a unified central guidance. Together with Theo Wiechert, who was responsible for youth work at the SPD's Central Committee, and with representatives of the Central Education Authority, which had been set up in August 1945 and which was run by Paul Wandel, later a secretary of the SED's ZK and now vice-president of the International Friendship League, we therefore prepared, on the recommendation of the KPD and the SPD central committees, a consultative meeting in Berlin in which representatives from the provinces of the Soviet zone of occupation and from Berlin took part. At the meeting on 10 September 1945 I spoke about the youth committees' experiences to date and about their future tasks. It was then decided that a central antifascist youth committee be set up of which I was appointed chairman. At the beginning the committee consisted of five representatives each from KPD and SPD; in October/November representatives from the Catholic and Protestant youth were added. Provincial youth committees were set up in the five provinces of the Soviet zone of occupation: Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia.

The first few months of my activity were taken up with talks, meetings and discussions of various problems concerning the young. There were disputes sometimes about the goal and direction, tasks and practical work of the youth committees. Opinions were not always uniform. Within both the KPD and the SPD there were those who said that separate, party-linked youth organisations would be more desirable and that, as with the two parties, integration should come later. Only in this way the leading role of the workers' youth could be guaranteed while it could not be achieved in

an integrated organisation comprising all the young people. Protestant and Catholic circles were keen to set up denominational youth federations. Some thought that an integrated organisation could not represent the varied interests of the young. Frequently we had to defend ourselves against the view that former members of the Nazi organisations should not be admitted to the youth work before they had proved themselves. The opinion that the young were not mature enough for political work or that politics were damaging to the young was also widespread.

It is not difficult to see that all these opinions amounted to calling into question the necessary unity of the youth movement. We did not let ourselves be shaken, however, in our conviction—based on experience—that only a unified organisation was adequate to the historical situation and to the interests of all young people. In protracted, sometimes heated discussions we won over most of our partners to agree to a unified antifascist youth organisation.

After twelve years of fascist dictatorship and war it was also discussed whether during this harsh post-war period the young should be allowed to dance, sing and engage in cultural and sports activities at all. To follow this line would have meant to deny the young their right to companionship and cheerfulness. I remembered how much we had enjoyed singing, dancing, games, hikes and sports in the Young Spartacus League and the KJVD. Light-hearted companionship was ■■ much a part of youth as were hikes, singing, dancing and games, music, theatre, literature and art. They were after all a source of optimism and *joie de vivre*. To deny the young this right meant to forbid them to be young. Therefore I insisted on creating conditions in which the young would have even more opportunity to enjoy this right.

When I look back on the activity of the youth committees I can say without exaggeration that they turned out to be an important factor in the struggle for antifascist democratic reformation. The unity of action between the SPD and the KPD was decisive in this respect. Strengthening the unity of the working class in the revolutionary reformation process and taking the first steps towards the integration of the two workers' parties, which were taken in late autumn 1945, were the decisive prerequisites for ■ unified democratic youth movement. It was enhanced by the unification of the trade unions which was then emerging. Impulses also came from the joint bloc policy of the antifascist democratic parties.

We received important advice on our youth work from leading members

of the SMAD. I had met their chief, Marshal Zhukov, for the first time in Berlin-Karlshorst in June 1945. I met him and Col.-Gen. V. I. Chuikov, later himself a Marshal of the Soviet Union, frequently thereafter. I found that they always had a ready ear for the problems of youth and helped wherever they could. I worked closely with Colonel S. I. Tulpanov, then chief of the SMAD's department of information, later a major-general and now a professor at Leningrad University. As he remembered later, we did not only talk "about the difficulties of our work but also about how one could facilitate the youth work ... I remember that Comrade Honecker considered it very important to draw on the common revolutionary and humanist traditions of the workers and the intelligentsia and to point out the necessity of awakening the young generation's pride in this tradition. He looked for and emphasised the things which the young had in common which could unite them in the construction of the antifascist democratic order."

Many Soviet comrades, among them youth officers like Major Ivan Beidin, performed great services for the development of our youth movement. Their knowledge, their demeanour, their comradely attitude and their friendly help impressed me. Many other members of the antifascist youth committees had similar experiences. A large number of Soviet Communists and Komsomols wearing the uniform of the Soviet army showed understanding and sympathy in helping our young, inexperienced friends in word and deed. Many a young person got rid of anti-communist and anti-Soviet prejudice through such direct contact.

The youth committees did much to overcome material shortages. They helped with setting up apprentice workshops, with repairing teaching facilities and making sure that there would be continuous instruction from 1 October 1945 when the schools were due to reopen. More than 10,000 young people took part in Berlin work details repairing destroyed roofs and setting up about 200 homes and athletics fields for the young. In Dessau youngsters repaired dwellings and schoolrooms and chopped firewood. Thuringian youths collected 400 hundredweight of apples for Berlin's children. The youth committees also helped to prepare the first Christmas celebrations for children in 1945. They organised cultural, literary, social and sports events.

However, despite all these successes we remained aware of the fact that for the time being we were reaching only a section of the young population. The mass of them remained on the sidelines, adopting a wait-and-see attitude. I pointed out the tasks resulting from this situation on 23 October

1945 in the *Berliner Zeitung*. On 1 November 1945, four months before the FDJ was founded, the first issue of the youth journal *Neues Leben*, whose editor I was in my capacity as chairman of the central youth committee, appeared. As can be seen from the masthead we called it the "Journal of the Free German Youth", thus documenting our determination to create the youth federation. To that effect I wrote in the introductory article that our goal was a new life which was to find its meaning in everything that was great and beautiful, everything that made up culture and civilisation. However, in order to achieve such a life we would first have to raise ourselves out of our present misery and clear away the visible and invisible debris of the past from the streets and from people's minds, we would have to put in our best efforts to bring about the reconstruction of town and countryside. This could only be achieved if we all stood together in a united front, boys and girls, young workers, school and university students, joined together in a great community anchored in our love for our hard-hit homeland.

I shall always remember 2 December 1945. On this day, for the first time since the end of the Nazi period, the most active of Berlin's youths and girls got together for a working session. More than 400 delegates from the Berlin youth committees plus members of the central youth committee and members from the provincial youth committees of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg sat and stood in the festively decorated hall of the Anna Magdalena Bach School, now the Carl-von-Ossietzky-Oberschule, in Berlin-Pankow. They were schoolchildren, apprentices, young workers and clerks, 14 to 20 years old. The average age was about 18. Most of them had grown up and been educated under the Nazi dictatorship.

Seven months against twelve years! This was the view of the sceptics. But on that 2 December all such calculations were thrown overboard by the young people present. This showed up clearly already when Otto Grotewohl, chairman of the SPD's ZK, spoke to them, also on behalf of his friend Wilhelm Pieck as he emphasised. With youthful verve and temperament they applauded him, certain that the democratic renaissance would succeed if they all joined forces.

In the meantime a man had entered the crowded hall almost unnoticed and had taken his seat quietly in one of the back rows. However, when the chief of the Berlin youth committee, Heinz Kessler, announced that the Chairman of the KPD, Wilhelm Pieck, was amongst us, a storm of en-

thusiasm arose such as the old school hall had never known. A wave of warm sympathy engulfed this man. This despite the fact that the young people had only known the workers' leader, so much admired by the older generation, for a short while. Only a few of the youngsters who now crowded around him had known anything about Wilhelm Pieck seven months earlier. Now, hundreds of Berlin boys and girls went wild with joy when they learned that he was amongst them.

How did this friendship come about? Wherever boys and girls had given a hand in the antifascist reconstruction since May 1945 they had worked shoulder to shoulder with responsible activists of the renewal movement: the Communists. The young soon came to trust these men and women.

During the meeting I spoke about the tasks of youth in the process of reconstruction. I reminded them of the sacrifices made by the antifascist resistance and exhorted them to ensure that these heroes should not have died in vain. Their fight and their work should not only be an example to us but also a great lesson. At this moment I remembered that almost to the day ten years before I had been arrested by the Nazis in Berlin on 4 December 1935 and incarcerated until April 1945. But that was the past, and now the present and the future demanded our attention. The *Junkers* and big estate owners had been stripped of their power by our democratic land reform. Now it was up to us to make sure that big industrialists should no longer have power and influence in the antifascist democratic state which we were determined to establish. The necessity of guaranteeing peace and a happy future for our people demanded this.

During the lively discussion one of the speakers was Wilhelm Pieck. Some parts of his speech may not have been understood by most of the young people present, among these the remark that behind all the hard work that had to be done there stood the ideal of socialism. But youth listens also with the heart and they felt the sincerity, straightforwardness, and convincing power of his personality. The calmness and objectivity of his exposition impressed them most. During the days of death and destruction in 1945 the young ones had felt the ground crumble under their feet. The sturdy figure up there on the platform, they felt immediately, gave their lives a firm and new basis regardless of whether they had been members of the Hitler Youth or the German Girls' Federation. Confidence evokes confidence. Here was a man who beamed confidence from his heart to the German youth. He could hear from the discussion that the young ones fully justified his trust. Germany would have a new future.

The following day the central youth committee, the delegates from the provincial youth committees and the Berlin main youth committee jointly passed a resolution headed "Life is calling our youth". It was the first document of the united youth movement in the Soviet zone of occupation. In it we declared: "Through peaceful work we shall rise and gain the confidence and respect of other nations. We have before us the great task of building a social order in which men will be educated in the love and respect of their fellow men regardless of race, nationality or creed, in which the cultural treasures and the achievements of science and technology shall be the property of all working people. This ideal shall spur our hearts and minds towards the great deeds of reconstruction."

The united antifascist youth movement developed neither "by order" nor under any "compulsion" but in the struggle for the final and complete annihilation of fascism, the overcoming of the consequences of the war and the establishment of antifascist democratic conditions. The more the young participated in this struggle the more they convinced themselves from their own experience and in practical action that the unified organisation of the working German youth was necessary for their peaceful and happy future.

While the SMAD and the officers of the Red Army who were responsible for the youth work in the provinces, supported everything that helped to include the young generation in the process of democratic development, the American, British and French military authorities soon began to obstruct antifascist activity in every possible way. By pressure and compulsion, bans and arrests they stopped the activities of the Communists, class-conscious Social Democrats and progressive bourgeois democrats. Thus the total abolition of fascism and militarism and the creation of antifascist democratic conditions was prevented in the western zones of occupation. This was obviously in accord with the intention of influential circles in the USA, Britain and France to give German monopoly capitalism a breathing space to recover from the most severe defeat in its history, to regroup its forces and to restore its shaken power. For the purposes of the cold war they needed German imperialism—as would soon be shown—as a spearhead against the Soviet Union.

I came to know from my own experience how the Potsdam Agreement and the other Allied resolutions on Germany were disregarded and violated in the three western zones of occupation at the end of 1945. By order of Wilhelm Pieck I went there in December to invite leading KPD activists to a consultative meeting in Berlin at the beginning of January 1946. The trip

from Berlin via Erfurt to Eisenach was anything but comfortable. People pushed and squeezed each other in overcrowded trains. Those who did not manage to force themselves into the crowded wagons either through doors or windows but were reckless enough travelled on footboards, bumpers or carriage roofs—yet another consequence of the war. During the final months and weeks before their decisive defeat the Nazis had succeeded in either destroying or sending off to the west two thirds of the locomotives and about 60 per cent of all passenger coaches from what was now the Soviet zone of occupation.

To cross the zonal border at Eisenach was not at all easy—despite a document signed by Marshal Zhukov. If his document looked unusual to the Red Army men, how would they react to it on the other side of the zonal border? Thus I reached Fulda in the American zone of occupation only via detours across the Rhön hills. I continued on an empty passenger train, in fact illegally, because Germans were not allowed to use trains in this area. When I found myself in danger of being discovered, I changed to a goods train. In Fulda I met KPD comrades who took me to Frankfurt-am-Main by car.

While driving through the western zones of occupation I saw bombed houses and factories as well as blown-up bridges and roads. But it confirmed what I knew from reports already: the degree of destruction was nowhere near as heavy as it was in large parts of the Soviet zone of occupation. In the latter the Nazi *Wehrmacht* and the *Waffen SS* had fanatically resisted the advancing Red Army right up to the last minute; they had destroyed innumerable bridges, roads and railway tracks, factories, power plants and other public utilities. The Red Army was to find only “scorched earth”. Furthermore, the USA and Britain had concentrated their bombing raids during the last year of the war on those areas which under Allied agreement were to be occupied by Soviet troops.

Wherever I went in the western zones of occupation I felt the readiness of the Communists and other antifascists to get on with the democratic renewal—but also the perpetual obstruction by the military authorities.

During this trip I was able to visit my parents, my sisters Gertrud and Frieda—my brother Robert was still a British prisoner of war—and many friends at Wiebelskirchen. As I arrived there my mother had just baked the Christmas cake. There was indescribable joy at the reunion after more than 10 years. We had lots of things to tell each other but regrettably there was not enough time. No more than a few days later I had to get on my way back.

Back at the KPD's ZK in Berlin's Wallstrasse I met Paul Verner in January 1946 who had just returned to Berlin after an adventurous trip from Sweden via Poland. Twelve years earlier, in 1934, we had got to know each other in the youth work at Saarbrücken. Ever since our reunion in January 1946 we have been working together for three and a half decades, in the Politbureau and the Secretariat of the ZK of our party of which Paul Verner has been a member for many years.

We met at the right moment. As Paul Verner remembers, I went to Wilhelm Pieck and discussed with him the question of Paul becoming involved in the youth work, which I thought was absolutely necessary. "My destination became clear the same day," he wrote. "I became a member of the youth department at the KPD's ZK, which was led by Erich, and also chief editor of the youth journal *Neues Leben*. Under his leadership and together with many former KJVD and SAJ members and a number of Christian youth activists and others who had not belonged to any party, we began the tempestuous creation of the unified antifascist and democratic youth organisation, the Free German Youth, the socialist youth federation of our age."

Conferences of delegates of the provincial youth committees took place until the beginning of February 1946. They demanded more and more strongly the formation of a youth organisation. It became increasingly clear that youth committees, the leadership of which had been appointed by local administrative authorities, were no substitute for an independent organisation led by the young people. Representatives of the KPD and the SPD central committees took this into account. On 7 February 1946 they agreed on the aims and organisational structure of a unified youth organisation. At the same time they confirmed that the future SED which was in the making would refrain from having its own youth organisation and instead give its full support to the Free German Youth which we were about to set up.

Negotiations with those responsible for youth work in the CDU and the LDPD and with representatives from Protestant and Catholic circles proved more difficult. Despite all political and ideological differences we finally came to an agreement with them too.

As I mentioned we turned to the SMAD on 26 February 1946 to get permission for the foundation of the FDJ. We attached a declaration of aims under the heading "What does the Free German Youth want?" and the statutes. We described our main purpose by saying that the boys and girls of the FDJ committed themselves to the reconstruction of their homeland on an antifascist democratic basis in this hour of need; that they were united

in their determination to help overcome through joint effort the misery caused by Nazism.

The FDJ was to be active in all zones of occupation. On 7 March 1946 the SMAD approved our application. But on account of opposition from the USA, Britain and France in the Allied Control Council the FDJ was officially accepted in Berlin only in the middle of October 1947. In the western zones of occupation its activities were severely obstructed and altogether banned five years later on 26 June 1951.

All young people between the ages of 14 and 25, with the exception of former full-time activists of the Hitler Youth, were to be admitted to the FDJ. A provisional leadership of the FDJ started its work at 39/40 Kronenstrasse, later the seat of the Junge Welt publishing organisation. As recommended by representatives of both workers' parties, I was appointed chairman. In connection with this development Paul Verner took over the youth department of the KPD's Central Committee.

At the first national conference of the KPD in Berlin on 2 and 3 March 1946, during which a balance-sheet of the implementation of the action programme of 1 June 1945 was drawn up and where the next steps towards a merger of the two workers' parties were discussed, I was elected a member of the ZK. I have belonged to it ever since.

Local branches of the FDJ sprang up very rapidly in the provinces, districts and towns of the Soviet zone of occupation. Four weeks later already we had more than 160,000 members in our organisation.

With the foundation of the FDJ historical lessons were drawn and the split in the young generation ended. For the first time in German history an organisation had been created in the ranks of which young people of different ideological persuasions, social background and occupation were united and which committed itself to social progress. This was a true turning-point in the history of the German youth movement.

While looking through documents for the writing of this book I hit on ■ manuscript for a brochure from March 1946 in which I had noted: "The youth of 1976 should have no reason to say that the youth of 1946 did not accomplish its historic mission." When 30 years later as General Secretary of the SED's Central Committee I spoke to the delegates of the 10th FDJ Congress about the implementation of the decisions taken by the 9th Party Congress of the SED I remembered those words. Indeed, the youth of the GDR can look back with pride on its achievements. In 1945 and in all the following years it has fulfilled its historic mission with honour.



On the platform committee 3rd row, 2nd from L of the congress
at which the Communist Party of Germany and the Social Democratic Party of Germany
merged to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Berlin, 21-22 April 1946.



At the first Congress of the Free German Youth
in Brandenburg an der Havel, 10 June 1946.

XI

Unity of the working class— Basic rights for the young generation

At Whitsun 1946, from 8 to 10 June, Brandenburg/Havel hosted the first “parliament” or congress of the FDJ. I certainly did not harbour the most pleasant of memories about this town right next to which was situated the prison of Brandenburg-Görden. However, at Whitsun 1946 it showed itself from its best side. Many of the inhabitants had decorated their houses with the red flags of the working class, the blue banners of the FDJ, garlands and streamers. They offered us quarters in their houses and proved themselves good hosts. The weather was warm and sunny most of the time. In short: everything was right for the festive occasion and our joyful mood. The latter was justified by more than one reason. Days of great historic significance lay just behind us, days which encouraged us and spurred us to new deeds.

The foundation of the FDJ in March 1946 bore witness to the great attraction which the idea of unity of all progressive forces had, to the strong impulses which the imminent merger of the KPD and the SPD into the SED had just given to the desire of youth for unity. Within the emerging unified revolutionary party we activists of the FDJ did our best to enhance the open-mindedness of the young generation for everything new, their willingness to work actively for the creation of ■ peaceful future, and their en-

thusiasm. In the March 1946 issue of *Einheit*, then a monthly publication dedicated to preparing the establishment of the SED and now the SED's theoretical organ, I had called it the party's task to educate the young to become socialists and never to forget that they were the sons and daughters of the working people and the bearers of mankind's greatest idea.

The unification of Communists and Social Democrats proceeded at a rapid pace. It happened in the factories, villages, towns, districts and provinces, first at separate, then at joint meetings. The decision of the members and not least the lively participation of the working people made it clear that the SED ~~was~~ evolving as a party which not only expressed itself in its principles and objectives as the avant-garde of true democracy, but which had grown out of the truly democratic will of the class-conscious workers and of the other working people. Its opponents cannot swallow this to this day. Their perpetually renewed talk about a "forced union" is merely a pathetic attempt to deflect attention from the fact that the western occupying powers opposed the workers' elementary urge towards unity by all kinds of coercive methods.

On 19 and 20 April 1946, at its 15th party congress, the KPD gave an account of its work since the Brussels party conference in October 1935. The delegates, of whom I ~~was~~ one, could present a proud balance-sheet of the unflagging, costly struggle of Ernst Thälmann's party against imperialism, fascism and war. In this struggle—as Wilhelm Pieck pointed out in his speech—the KPD always aimed at unifying the working class under a revolutionary leadership and at winning for it the ruling power in the state in order to end capitalist exploitation and suppression and introduce socialism. The delegates approved unanimously the decision on the union with the SPD and nominated 40 KPD members, including myself, for the party executive to be elected at the unification congress.

The latter took place on 21 and 22 April 1946. It was a happy and uplifting feeling for me to experience this important event at close quarters. Thousands of Berliners welcomed the delegates and guests of the unification congress in the Friedrichstrasse in front of what was then the Admiralspalast (now the Metropol Theatre), on the morning of 21 April 1946. At ten o'clock, Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl stepped onto the stage from opposite sides and shook hands in the middle. Minutes of applause welled up. "An old dream has become reality: the unity of the German working class," said Otto Grotewohl, and Wilhelm Pieck replied: "We shall make our Socialist Unity Party the party of the millions of German working people

in order to beat all internal enemies and to complete the great work which is our aim: *socialism*." These words remain indelible in my memory.

By their handshake the chairmen of the KPD and SPD had sealed the merger. The members of the party executive which had been proposed at the preceding separate party congresses of the KPD and SPD were voted onto the platform committee. I sat there among such experienced and well-known leaders of the German workers' movement as Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht, Max Fechner, Franz Dahlem and Otto Buchwitz. On the second day Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl spoke, often interrupted by applause. The delegates adopted the "Principles and Objectives of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany" unanimously. Thus a scientific programme had been created which showed the road to socialism via persistent pursuance of the anti-imperialist democratic reformation. The SED declared as its target "liberation from all exploitation and suppression, from economic crises, poverty, unemployment and the imperialist threat of war. This target, the solution of the vital national and social problems of our people, can only be reached by socialism."

We had included a short, clear definition of socialism in our programme: Elimination of exploitation by changing capitalist ownership of the means of production into social ownership and by creating a socialist planned economy. We declared the conquest of political power by the working class the *sine qua non* of a socialist society. This conformed to the universally valid teachings of Marxism-Leninism on socialist revolution and the building of socialism.

After the adoption of the principles and objectives, the party statutes and a manifesto to the German people, we unanimously passed the historic resolution on the merger of the KPD and the SPD into the SED. We all rose from our seats enthusiastically and sang the "Internationale". Then the unification congress elected Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl chairmen of the SED and its executive. Among the latter, as representatives of the young, were Edith Baumann, Ernst Hoffmann, Heinz Kessler and myself. To the young generation the manifesto said: "The future of the fatherland shall be in your hands. Our view of the world must become the belief of the young generation. Here you find the highest ideals. The SED guarantees your present interests at school, in jobs and public life. It wants to see you at work, at peaceful reconstruction and learning; but it also wants you to enjoy leisure, taking part in hikes, dances and games. It represents the new era. The SED, this young, lively, fighting party, is therefore your party, the

party of German youth.” From today’s point of view it may be said that the unity of the working class on a revolutionary basis is a fundamental achievement. Without it the rise of our country out of the catastrophe of the Second World War, out of the material and ideological débris left behind by the Nazi régime, would have been as impossible as the success of the socialist development. From the foundation of the SED a unified revolutionary force accrued to the working class and the working masses. They have thus been put into the position of carrying on the fight for socialism successfully and of meeting their commitments in the struggle for peace and security. The unification of the working class is one of the historic events the full meaning and impact of which will become more and more apparent as the time passes.

A few days after the unification congress I spoke at an FDJ conference about our immediate tasks, Hermann Axen about organisational problems and Paul Verner about propaganda work. We decided to hold the first FDJ parliament at Brandenburg/Havel. We chose the term “parliament” deliberately, so that the democratic nature of the FDJ, its incessant pleading for the growth of antifascist democracy and for the complete protection of democratic rights by the working people and their youth should be characterised as precisely as possible. At the same time we were keenly interested in discussing all problems that were of interest to the young and thus including young people from the most divergent classes and sections of society in our organisation.

With this congress we also initiated the public discussion on the draft for the “Fundamental Rights of the Young Generation”. The draft had been worked out—on the suggestion of the KPD’s ZK—by a working group which I headed, and it had been thoroughly debated in the youth committee of the ZK.

The content of the “fundamental rights” was the political rights of the young: to participate with equal rights in political life, to be entitled to vote at the age of 18 and to be elected at the age of 21, and to take on senior functions in the state and in the economy. They included further the right to work and recreation, the right to education and the right to happiness. When we worked out these fundamental rights we had our eyes on proposing demands which the young could understand, which matched their interests, and to the implementation of which they were ready to pledge themselves. This was the way of familiarising them with antifascist democracy and enabling them to protect their democratic rights. In this way we would win them over to the FDJ and to democratic renewal.

Public discussion helped us to win more understanding from many young people. But it also showed that mistaken ideas, about which I have written already, were still widespread. Even young LDPD and CDU activists were of the opinion that these rights went too far. Later, however, they took an active part in their implementation within the FDJ.

The participation in the discussion and realisation of democratic basic rights—which, by the way, had been practised for decades in the revolutionary workers' movement and which we have implemented time and again since 1945—was not sufficient to achieve participation by all the young in the democratic reconstruction. The question of democracy is always also a question of power. In the Young Spartacus League and the Young Communist League the acquisition of knowledge about nature and society, science and culture was one of our most important activities. Based on this I suggested, soon after the foundation of the FDJ in spring 1946, the introduction of youth schools. There the activists of the FDJ should be familiarised with the fundamental questions of the history of the German people and of the democratic workers' movement as well as the antifascist democratic reformation.

A few days before the opening of the first parliament we were able to inaugurate the FDJ youth college, now the Wilhelm Pieck youth college on the shores of the Bogensee near Bernau. Together with Heinz Kessler I had gone looking for suitable premises in the vicinity of Berlin several times. These here were adequate to our ideas and intended purpose. The SED's party executive agreed and helped us set it up. Wilhelm Pieck and other comrades came regularly to the Bogensee to give lectures.

At the first parliament at Brandenburg/Havel I expounded the fundamental rights of the young generation. At that time about 10 per cent of the young generation in the Soviet zone of occupation were members of our organisation. Members of the FDJ in the western zones of occupation had come to attend the parliament; they reported on the difficult battle of the youth there for their rights. The delegates confirmed the fundamental rights of the young generation and called upon all German youth to take the road leading out of débris and misery, the road to the reconstruction of our homeland. They set themselves the task of winning over all German boys and girls to the great ideals of freedom, humanism, ■ militant democracy, peace and friendship among nations and the active participation in the rebuilding of our fatherland. The parliament elected the members of the Central Council and voted me unanimously chairman of the FDJ. This concluded the constituent assembly of the FDJ.

The FDJ had emerged as a unified youth organisation from the struggle against reactionary forces which tried again to split the young into a multitude of political and denominational federations. The unity and the antifascist democratic nature of the FDJ had to be defended against many attacks. In the centre of the conflict were the fundamental rights of the young generation which could only be realised if the antifascist democratic reformation were continued.

No sooner had a few days passed since the parliament than a real test had to be faced. In the province of Saxony, an industrial centre of the Soviet-occupied zone, a referendum was held on 30 June 1946 upon a proposal by the SED and in agreement with the bloc of antifascist democratic parties, on the expropriation without compensation of war and Nazi criminals. The FDJ took part in its preparation and implementation. I still remember well the heated arguments with monopolist-capitalist forces and right-wing opportunist leaders in the western zones as well as our own reactionary politicians. They used every means to prevent or disrupt the referendum. Because they feared an overwhelming vote by the people against imperialism, fascism and war they invented the most ludicrous phrases. They made the ludicrous claims that all private property was in danger, that the finely tuned mechanism of the economy would be destroyed, crafts and trade ruined and chaos made inevitable.

Of course, the FDJ did not remain unaffected by all this. It was therefore important for us to explain to all the youth what the real aims of the referendum were. Those classes which had been responsible for the Nazi dictatorship, the imperialist acts of aggression and the crimes against peace and humanity committed in the course of them were to be stripped of power. In this sense I had declared at the first parliament that youth had the greatest interest in creating conditions in Germany which would never again permit war criminals to abuse the young generation. Therefore we appealed to the young voters in Saxony to apply all their energies to insisting that the main culprits of the catastrophe should be handed over to the people for judgement.

A large part of the working youth took part in the action with passionate enthusiasm. They had understood that what was involved was a life without exploitation and war, a future in which they would take their fate into their own hands. In many ways, in meetings and rallies, in shouting choruses and public appearances of cultural and sports groups, cycle rallies, distribution of leaflets and posters tens of thousands of young people contributed to the

outcome of the referendum in which more than 77 per cent of the electorate voted for the transfer of factories owned by war and Nazi criminals into public ownership.

On this basis all provincial administrations of the Soviet zone of occupation issued directives for the expropriation of the factories of the war and Nazi criminals during the following months. By 1948, 9,281 factories belonging to big industrial combines had been taken into public ownership, amongst them important parts of Wintershall, IG Farben, Mannesmann, Flick, Siemens, AEG and Krupp. The big banks like Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank, the savings banks and other financial and credit establishments, were also transferred to public ownership.

Thus the economic foundations of the power of imperialism were dismantled for good in the Soviet zone of occupation. This was an important victory for the democratic forces in their struggle for an antifascist democratic German state. At the same time it conformed to the agreements and resolutions of the Allies about the removal from power of fascist and militarist forces.

The transfer of the factories of the monopolist bourgeoisie into ownership by the whole people and the management of the thus created public sector of the economy by the new democratic state bodies was a decisive step forward. The nationally owned factories (VEB) made it possible to rebuild the economy systematically so as to overcome the serious consequences of the war, hunger and need, to increase production and to improve the living standard of the people step by step. Gradually it was possible to achieve a rational division of labour, specialisation and concentration of production in the interest of the people. The transformation of monopolist-capitalist ownership of the means of production into public ownership was, after all, an absolute requirement in order to eliminate the exploitation of man by man. It was necessary in order to create the socio-economic and material-technological basis for building a socialist society and to ensure peace, democracy and material security for our people. All that followed proved that our thinking had been right beyond doubt. But more of this later.

For the young the referendum was a living school of political struggle. Their antifascist democratic consciousness matured. This and the results of the referendum also facilitated the implementation of the fundamental rights of the young generation. This was proved when the principle of "equal pay for equal work" was enforced. I had spoken out repeatedly for the implementation of this principle within the SED's party leadership, the Central

Council of the FDJ and in talks with Marshal of the Soviet Union V. I. Sokolovski, then head of the SMAD. No doubt, all young workers rejoiced when SMAD order No. 253, issued on 17 August 1946, introduced equal pay for blue and white collar workers for equal work performance regardless of age or sex. At the same time, older blue and white collar workers voiced concern, doubts or even rejection of this "generosity". There were not a few attempts to undermine the principle. But the young workers insisted on their right. I encouraged them in this in discussions in factories and offices, in meetings and at other youth events.

The young generation responded with enthusiasm and a work performance that was in no way inferior to that of their elders. I remember in particular the countless youngsters who since May 1945 had helped in clearing away the rubble and rebuilding destroyed factories, bridges, roads, railway lines and dwellings. Members of the FDJ and non-organised youths lent a hand when after the democratic land reform houses, stables and barns had to be built for the new farmers. Some almost completely destroyed villages were rebuilt by members of the FDJ, the best known being Adelsdorf in the district of Grossenhain which was given the name of "Youth Village". Many thousands of young people helped with bringing in the harvest and fighting the bark-beetle plague in the woods of Thuringia and Brandenburg. Youth brigades from the FDJ worked after their regular working hours at the construction of the cellulose factory at Zerbst. And many members of our organisation took part in a scheme to provide pleasant holidays to as many children as possible for the first time after the war. These are only a few among countless examples.

I also remember the first East Saxon Youth Congress on 17 and 18 August 1946. Among the speakers were Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Buchwitz for the SED, who addressed the more than 20,000 youths in Lusatia, an area in the southeast of today's GDR in which the Sorbs, a Slavic ethnic group, have lived for centuries. I explained the aims and tasks of the FDJ. Present also were the youth secretaries of the provincial executives of all three parties in Saxony, among them a Saxon representative of the LDPD and secretary for youth, Wolfgang Mischnick, now chairman of the parliamentary FDP in the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany.

About a month earlier the *Serbska Młodzież* (Sorb Youth) had constituted itself and cooperated closely with the FDJ and merged with it in late 1948/early 1949. For the first time the Sorbs were no longer sat upon as a national minority. Their rights and duties were equal to those of all other

citizens. They were encouraged in the development of their culture and in preserving their traditions. The young Sorbs are among the most active members of the youth federation.

The Youth Congress at Bautzen was already dominated by the local elections which were to take place in September 1946 in the Soviet zone of occupation and by the provincial elections scheduled for October 1946. The FDJ's Central Council appealed to all young people to stand up for the fundamental rights of the young generation during the election campaign and to support those candidates who worked for implementation of these rights. At a working session of the SED's youth secretaries from 30 July to 1 August 1946 at Kühlungsborn where the elections were one of the issues discussed, Wilhelm Pieck confirmed that the FDJ would always have the support of the party of the working class. I proposed to name experienced FDJ activists as candidates for the local elections.

The youths took an active part in the election campaign even though most of them were under voting age which was then still 21. Members of the FDJ appeared as candidates on the party tickets of the three parties: SED, CDU and LDPD. It was in line with the policy of the SED that its ticket should include the largest number of young candidates. The election manifesto of the SED included many important demands by the young, such as occupational training to build up a force of competent young skilled workers; free training for youngsters to become teachers, technicians and agronomists; free medical care; the establishment of recreation homes, sports grounds and hostels for youth; and expansion of vocational schools.

The SED won most of the votes in the autumn election in 1946. In the September local elections it won more than 5 million votes out of a total of 9 million, and in the provincial elections in October about 4.7 million out of nearly 9.9 million votes. 100,886 out of 132,356 elected local representatives, 3,124 out of 6,045 district representatives and 249 out of 519 provincial representatives belonged to the SED. This was a clear-cut vote for the antifascist democratic reformation in the Soviet zone of occupation. More than 1,500 youths were elected to local councils, 250 to district councils and 13 to the provincial parliaments. Thus the FDJ had proved itself as a unified antifascist and democratic youth organisation in the election campaign.

The struggle in summer and autumn 1946 with reactionary forces in the Soviet zone of occupation and with monopoly capitalism in the western zones which was in the process of restoring its power under the protection

of the western occupation powers and preparing to split Germany had made one thing clear: The FDJ and youth as a whole had to be better equipped for the intensifying class struggle. This was all the more important because western imperialist circles were trying hard to sow seeds of discord in the ranks of the democratic youth. They used primarily reactionary spokesmen from the bourgeois parties and employed certain forces within the FDJ. It was not by accident that new attacks on the fundamental rights of the young generation were launched.

I therefore concerned myself particularly with the role of the FDJ in the intellectual struggle of our time at the fourth session of the Central Council from 28 to 30 November 1946. We discussed the new conditions which existed in the Soviet zone of occupation for the free development of young people's personalities and the possibilities for making use of these conditions. At the same time I pointed out how important it was to defend the unity of the young steadfastly.

All attempts at that time to split the FDJ from within or without failed because of the vigilance of the young. Firm in the knowledge that they were serving the cause of the people, they overcame all difficulties and created the foundation for the development of the FDJ into a mass organisation.

Many leaders and groups of the FDJ helped to ease the extremely arduous situation of the people during the long and hard winter of 1946/47. Members of the FDJ in the provinces of Saxony and Brandenburg chopped more than 4,000 cubic metres of firewood and young miners went on extra shifts in the coal mines. To make sure that the 1947 spring sowing was done on schedule, the provincial organisation of the FDJ in Brandenburg formed 21 repair and 86 work brigades. The FDJ members proved themselves particularly well during the floods which devastated the Oderbruch that spring and which covered 55,000 hectares of agricultural land, destroying many farms and precious cattle. The Brandenburg provincial organisation formed 169 mobile brigades which worked untiringly to repair the damage. FDJ groups collected money all over the country for the farmers of the Oderbruch. Those actions added considerably to the esteem in which the FDJ was held by the public.

It had been decided in the Central Council of the FDJ to publish a newspaper under the title of *Junge Welt*. The first issue was published on 12 February 1947, at first as a weekly and since March 1952 as a daily. Soon it was more and more appreciated by the young. It considered it its task to put forward the interests of the young generation with youthful en-

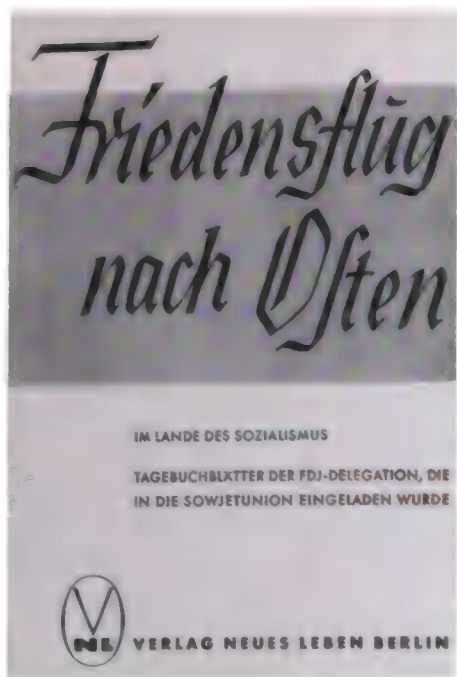
thusiasm as I had said in the introduction to the first issue. In particular, *Junge Welt* helped the FDJ to enforce during the following years the fundamental rights of the young generation and to defend the unity of youth.

At the second parliament of the FDJ held from 23 to 26 May 1947 at Meissen we were able to establish that, contrary to many pessimistic predictions, large sections of German youth had broken with the past. Within the Soviet zone of occupation alone more than 454,000 young people were united in the FDJ at that point in time. Within its ranks they fought for a united, democratic and peace-loving German state.

However, even more important was the fact that, thanks to the consistent policy of the SED and the support from the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (FDGB), other antifascist parties and the democratic administration, we had succeeded in taking a big step forward towards the realisation of the fundamental rights of the young generation. What the young had only dared to dream in the past had become reality.

They received equal pay for equal work; the working week for the 14 to 16 year olds was reduced to 42 hours, and for the 16 to 18 year olds to 45 hours. The number of workers' and peasants' children at secondary schools, colleges and universities had increased considerably: by spring 1947 as many as 15 per cent of all students came from workers' and peasants' families. In Saxony the provincial parliament had reduced, at the suggestion of the SED, the voting age to 18 and the age for being elected to 21. Many sports fields, cultural centres for the young and youth hostels had come into existence. Health and social care had been greatly improved.

The granting of comprehensive democratic rights in the political, economic and social fields made the young the builders of their own new life. It permitted them to take their place in the life of our people, to play their part in society. We all felt that our work had been worth while. This gave us new enthusiasm.



Cover and title-page of the pamphlet describing the
“Peace Flight to the East”, 1947.

XII

Peace Flight to the East

On 5 August 1947 at Berlin's Schönefeld airfield. Hermann Axen welcomed back our delegation which had been in the Soviet Union since 19 July 1947. We had eventful days behind us. For me it was the second stay in the land of the Soviets since attending the International Lenin School in 1930/31. The purpose and results of this new trip were quite different.

Following an initiative by the Central Council of the FDJ I had approached the SMAD on 14 July 1947 with the request to make it possible for a delegation of German youth to take part in the sports festival of Soviet youth in Moscow. "We consider," I wrote at the time, "the establishment of friendly relations between Soviet and German youth a prerequisite for the achievement of lasting peace. Participation by our representatives in the Soviet youth's festival would mean valuable support for our battle against the anti-Soviet propaganda which is being intensively spread amongst the German youth at present."

A bare three days later I was informed that the Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth had invited a delegation of the FDJ to go to Moscow. When I broke the news to the Central Committee there was great joy. To us this invitation was proof, not only that the Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth and the Komsomol harboured no feelings of hatred and revenge

against German youth, but that they were ready to help us. At the same time we saw in it the first and most important step towards international recognition of our youth movement.

On the morning of 19 July 1947 the Soviet plane which was to take us to Moscow took off. There was little time for preparations. The deputy chairman of the FDJ, Edith Baumann, was a member of the delegation. She had been a member of the SAJ since 1925 and had been incarcerated in Nazi gaols from 1933 to 1936. After the liberation she had helped to build up the antifascist democratic youth movement. Other members of the delegation were Heinz Kessler, Robert Menzel and Herbert Geissler who was responsible for sports in the Central Council of the FDJ and who in 1948 ceased to work for the youth federation.

We were met by a vice-president of the Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth at Moscow's Vnukovo airport. At customs control my skat playing cards caused some consternation. I had enjoyed playing skat since I was a youngster and therefore used to take a pack of cards on my trips. In the Soviet Union card games were not looked upon favourably and it took a certain amount of persuasion not to have them confiscated.

After a cordial welcome from our Moscow friends we drove to the city centre. I remembered well what Moscow had looked like in 1931 but now it was past recognition. Whole residential quarters, wide streets, bridges and underpasses had been built. There was construction going on everywhere.

On 20 July 1947, we took part in the great sports parade: an impressive experience. Preliminary talks with leading members of the Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth followed. On 21 July we were received by the Central Committee of the Komsomol. The first secretary, N. A. Mikhailov, was interested in all aspects of the FDJ's activities. Towards the end of our stay Edith Baumann and I had another talk with him, lasting several hours. He passed on important experiences from the work of the Komsomol and assured us of his support in the struggle for international recognition of the FDJ and its admission to the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY).

In all our encounters we felt ourselves among friends. To experience this and to see at the same time the dreadful effects of the Nazis' occupation policy depressed us and put us to shame. People worked under indescribably difficult conditions to heal the terrible wounds which the war had inflicted on the peoples of the Soviet Union. There were towns and villages reduced to their foundation walls; factories, state farms, agricultural cooperatives,

scientific institutes and irreplaceable cultural monuments of which nothing remained but rubble and ashes. There were the innumerable wounded, the more than 20 million Soviet citizens who had given their lives or had been murdered. We experienced the indomitable will and the firm resolve to build, jointly with the nations liberated from the imperialist oppressors, a new and better world. Despite the great sacrifices, the enormous destruction, the immeasurable suffering which the fascist aggressors had inflicted upon the country we were received cordially as representatives of a new, antifascist and democratic Germany.

These impressions are still as vivid with me now as they were when I received them, and there is just not enough space here to describe them all. Five days had been planned for our stay in Moscow; they became 18 days. Among the places we visited in Moscow were the Historical Museum, the Lenin Library, the University and the Lenin Mausoleum. At a Pioneers' camp where Moscow schoolchildren spent carefree summer holidays we experienced the work of the V. I. Lenin Pioneer Organisation.

Following a suggestion by our Soviet friends we were guests at a sanatorium where members of the glorious Soviet army who had been seriously wounded in the war against Hitler's Germany were looked after. As Heinz Kessler was to write: "We visited the place with a heavy heart. We were to meet Soviet people who had had to sacrifice man's most precious possession, their health, because of the Germans who had followed the call of German imperialism..."

In the summer of 1947, hatred of everything German would have been understandable. If one had tried to condense what our Soviet friends said it would read like this: "It was bitter, terrible; we sacrificed much, millions sacrificed all that is dear to Soviet people. We defended our socialist homeland successfully against those who treacherously invaded it. We paid with our lives and our blood for the freedom of nations and restored it to them. We never identified the German people with German imperialism and its most fearsome outgrowth, Nazism."

It was encouraging for us to hear these words: "We are happy to have with us Germans who like ourselves have fought, fight and will fight against imperialism, who are, like ourselves, determined to bring about a new world that will serve and belong to the working people."

I was deeply touched and replied on behalf of all the members of our delegation that our gratitude for all that the Soviet people had done, for their confidence in us, was unbounded. We explained to the Soviet comrades

how under the leadership of the SED more and more of our people were helping to destroy, root and branch, imperialism, militarism and fascism and to lay the foundations for a German state that would go forward in firm friendship with the Soviet Union for the happiness of all nations. We reported with respect and admiration on the active support we had received from the comrades of the Red Army. To these comrades who were convalescing at the sanatorium I promised: "We were, we are and we shall remain your friends, class brothers of the peoples of the Soviet Union. We shall spare no effort to make sure that this spirit will in future be shared by everybody in our socialist homeland."

On 26 July 1947 we flew to Stalingrad (now Volgograd). This city bore the most cruel scars of the war, having been almost completely razed to the ground. We visited the legendary Pavlov house which Sergeant Pavlov and nine Red Army men had held for 58 days and nights against a vastly superior number of Nazi troops.

Here too we were received as friends. We were regaled with food and drink which our hosts themselves had to do without most of the time. It was another proof of the proverbial Russian hospitality which I had come to know and appreciate as early as 1930/31. Since then, however, there had been four years of war. It had been waged by Germans against the country which had been peacefully pursuing its socialist development, the country in which the German language had always been highly regarded and where the achievements of German culture and science stood in high esteem, not to speak of the life and work of the greatest sons of the German people, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the land of such outstanding workers' leaders as August Bebel, Wilhelm and Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Ernst Thälmann.

The city's Komsomol invited us for a boat trip on the Volga. Our hosts sang Russian folk songs and we had to sing too—German folk songs. Then we sang working-class songs together. In the "Red October" foundry works we saw proof of the determination of the people of Stalingrad to rebuild their city. Totally destroyed during the war, the works had already reached about 75 per cent of its prewar output.

An evening with Komsomol activists completed our stay in Stalingrad. Time and again we toasted our mutual friendship. I am definitely not against "spirituous liquor", but that night we all had to watch it in order not to get too much of a good thing. The following day I gave a speech that was broadcast. When we said goodbye to our Stalingrad hosts on 30 July 1947

they asked us to tell the truth about the Soviet Union after our return to Germany and to describe things ■ we had seen them. This we promised to do.

In the evening we took the train to Leningrad where new impressions awaited us. But even here, in the city of Lenin which had been surrounded and besieged for 900 days by the fascist armies, marked by suffering but unconquered there was not ■ word of reproach. We visited the destroyed Petershof and the almost unscathed Hermitage.

At the end of our stay we visited the Kremlin. On 5 August 1947 we started on our way home. During the flight we had much to talk about. We all had one particularly deep impression: Everywhere we had felt the stubborn will of the Soviet peoples to rebuild their country and make it more beautiful than it had been before the devastation. We had come to know their absolute love for peace. In our talks with workers, young people and intellectuals we had heard nothing about any necessity or probability of ■ new war but much about the commitment to do everything for peace. We heard nothing about rejection of the German people or of German youth but we found stark hatred for fascism, the worst enemy of progress, the scourge of mankind.

Our trip went down in history as the "Peace Flight to the East". The most important step so far had been taken to break through the isolation into which the fascist war had thrust our people and its youth.

The moment we arrived at Berlin's Schönefeld airfield we had to answer dozens of questions from journalists. All the major newspapers in the Soviet-occupied zone reported on our stay in the Soviet Union. We were expected to tell everybody about our impressions and the results of our trip. We did our best to answer these requests because we considered this not only our duty to our own youth but also a way of thanking our hosts.

In the many lectures and essays which I produced at the time one thought kept recurring: Nobody who was striving for friendship among the youth of the world, who hated war and loved peace, nobody who considered peace the foundation of future happiness could ignore the fact that the flight of our delegation from Berlin to Moscow and our stay in the Soviet Union had turned ■ new page in the history of peaceful relations between Soviet and German youth.

These thoughts written down under the immediate impression of our experiences were fully confirmed during the following years. Our "Peace Flight" has an important place not only in the relationship between the FDJ and the Komsomol. It was also extremely important for the establishment

of relations with youth organisations of other countries and with the World Federation of Democratic Youth. But I shall have more to say of that later.

The Central Council of the FDJ worked out a plan which assigned concrete tasks to every member of our delegation for the evaluation of our trip. This plan was fulfilled in every point but one: the distribution of our report in the Western zones of occupation. These did not grant us entry permits. The truth about the Soviet Union was obviously not in demand with the Western occupation powers, the monopoly capitalist circles nor, regrettably, with certain Social Democratic leaders in that part of Germany. It did not fit their anti-communist and anti-Soviet concept of cold war and certainly not the ambitions of the USA with its Marshall Plan which had been announced on 5 June 1947. This programme, camouflaged as "economic aid for the reconstruction of Europe" was aimed at establishing the economic, political and military domination of Europe by the USA. It was intended to create the basis for a military bloc directed against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies.

The USA "generously" offered Marshall Plan aid also to the USSR and the people's democracies of eastern and southeastern Europe. However, it tied this offer to conditions the acceptance of which would in the last analysis have amounted to the surrender of their sovereignty, independence and gains. They therefore rejected this kind of "aid". Let those who carry government responsibility in Western European countries nowadays decide for themselves from a historical perspective what kind of "blessing" the Marshall Plan has brought to their countries and what price in terms of dependence and perpetual interference in their internal and external affairs they have had to pay for it. It was certainly no gain for peace, security, democracy and progress on our continent but rather one of the causes for the acceleration of the cold war and the hardening of confrontation. Later I shall comment on the effects the Marshall Plan had on the GDR in another context.

In the Soviet zone of occupation we could report truthfully about the Soviet Union in newspapers, journals, broadcasts, meetings, forums and talks—as we had promised our hosts. In this way we contributed to the development of a new relationship between our youth and the Soviet youth, between our people and the people of the Soviet Union. The FDJ has felt committed to this task ever since then. Brotherly friendship between FDJ and Komsomol grew up over the years on the basis of the personal contacts which we had established in July/August 1947.

In 1948 we were able to develop our relationship further. V. I. Kochemasov, then chairman of the Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth and after that secretary of the Komsomol's Central Committee, was in Berlin. He wrote later about our first encounter: "We had very long talks about the state of political consciousness of German youth, about the tasks and aims of the FDJ and the experiences of the Soviet youth federation. In this context Comrade Honecker developed a clear programme, both topical and future-oriented, for the antifascist and socialist education of the young generation. These talks, together with meetings with other members and activists of the FDJ, convinced me that a new generation was growing up which would greatly contribute to the cause of peace, democracy and socialism and to the strengthening of the friendship with the Soviet Union."

When I took part, together with Paul Verner, in the 9th Komsomol Congress in Moscow a good one and a half years later in March 1949 I could report to our Soviet friends that the youth in the eastern parts of Germany understood and supported the peace policy of the Soviet Union more and more.

Relations between the Komsomol and FDJ in 1947 contributed decisively to opening the gates to the youth of the world for the progressive German youth and to overcoming the isolation caused by fascism. During a world youth conference held in London on 10 November 1945 the World Federation of Democratic Youth had been founded. At the beginning of December 1945 our Central Antifascist Youth Committee received an invitation to send a representative to the WFDY Council as an observer. We nominated Heinz Kessler. At the meeting of the youth committees on 2 and 3 December 1945 I had declared with regard to this that we would prove by our attitude how serious we were in our resolve to safeguard peace. In an article published by the *Tägliche Rundschau* of 10 November 1946 to mark the first anniversary of the foundation of the WFDY I pointed out the common interests of the world federation and the progressive German youth. At the same time I took a stand against the view which practically demanded from the FDJ that it would have to "cleanse" itself of the past before it could be accepted into the ranks of world youth. In view of the antifascist attitude of many FDJ members it was obvious that the road of the progressive German youth to the WFDY could not be a penitential journey to Canossa. For them too freedom, democracy and progress had been and remained the prime commandments for their activity. Despite all sacrifices we had never

ceased to fight for them. Therefore we had a right to be accepted on equal terms as respected members in the ranks of world youth.

We had created our FDJ on a decidedly antifascist and democratic basis. For we knew the serious crimes of the German fascists. However, it would be wrong to pick out the young as the ones responsible for these crimes. In February 1947 the Central Council of the FDJ discussed our relationship with the WFDY. We considered the establishment of friendly ties with the democratic youth of the world as a valuable aid to the democratic development of the German youth. The principles of the WFDY were pronounced an inseparable part of the principles and objectives of the FDJ.

The FDJ gatherings during the world youth weeks in March 1946 and March 1947 bore witness to the sincerity of our point of view. We understood it not just as a demand made on others but in the first place on ourselves. From 26 May to 14 June 1947 a delegation from the WFDY visited the Soviet zone of occupation. Among them were young people from Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, the USSR and the USA. They were refused entry into the Western zones. They recognised the antifascist democratic activity of the FDJ while registering with concern that the Potsdam Agreement was being but insufficiently implemented in the Western zones.

Representatives of the FDJ were not yet invited to take part in the first World Youth Festival in Prague in July/August 1947. But already at the Prague meeting of the Council of the WFDY in the second half of August 1947 I was able to report for the first time on the FDJ's activity. The great resonance which the WFDY's solidarity campaigns for the youth of Greece, Spain, Vietnam and China had found in the FDJ, the clear commitment of our youth federation to the peaceful and democratic development in Germany contributed greatly to the admission of the FDJ by the Council of the WFDY on the recommendation of the Polish delegation on 21 August 1948 in a unanimous decision. This was the recognition of our efforts to educate the youth of our country in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity. In September 1949 the International Union of Students also admitted the FDJ. At the second World Youth Congress in Budapest during the same month I was elected to the Executive Committee of the WFDY.

At the second World Festival of Youth and Students which took place before this congress a delegation from the FDJ took part for the first time. Wilhelm Pieck was present at their send-off at Berlin's Ostbahnhof. 750 of

the best members of our organisation experienced this festival of the progressive international youth. Leader of our delegation was Heinz Kessler who was also elected a member of the Council of the WFDY at the World Youth Congress. Our delegation represented our youth organisation creditably at this meeting. It was therefore no accident that the FDJ was called upon to organise the third World Festival, planned for 1951.



The historic torchlight procession held by young people in Berlin on 11 October 1949 to mark the founding of the German Democratic Republic.

XIII

The birth of our state

There are events in the life of a nation the historical greatness and significance of which become increasingly evident with the passing of time. The foundation of the GDR on 7 October 1949 is undoubtedly one of these. The establishment of the first socialist state of workers and peasants on German soil—this can safely be said after three decades—marks the decisive turning-point in the history of the German people. More than that: it marks a turning-point in the history of Europe.

This fact, nowadays recognised by many politicians of the most various hues outside our own country, was realised only by a few 30 years ago. Every one of those historic days in October 1949 was marked for myself and my comrades in the SED's party leadership—which then had its headquarters at Prenzlauer Tor in the Haus der Einheit (Unity House), now the premises of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism of the SED's ZK at 1 Wilhelm Pieck Strasse—by struggle for the implementation of the strategy which took into account the real situation which had developed in Germany and at the same time pointed the way to a socialist future for the German people. Those were days of discussions with workers, peasants, scientists and artists and, of course, particularly with the young. After all what was at stake was nothing less than the foundation of a state which was to be a state of the working people and their youth.

At the same time we had many talks, marked by mutual trust, with our partners from the other parties in the democratic bloc. Jointly we searched for ways to create for this state a broad basis comprising all classes and social levels, a national front of all democratic and patriotic forces.

We had tough disputes with reactionary politicians. They resisted the establishment of the first workers' and peasants' state in German history and cooperated with the restorationist forces which had created the Federal Republic of Germany as an imperialist German state in September 1949.

Since the liberation from Nazism in May 1945 we had made fundamental changes in our country. They had been years of hard work, great privation and perpetual embittered disputes with reactionary forces.

In October 1949 we created for the first time a German state the destiny of which was fully determined by the nature and the laws of the historical epoch of the world's transition from capitalism to socialism, which had begun with the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917. The foundation of the GDR was an expression of the change in the international balance of forces since the historic victory of the Soviet peoples over Hitlerism. The emergence of a workers' and peasants' state on German soil increased the influence of socialism in Europe. It was a serious defeat for world imperialism. With the appearance of the GDR on the international scene the chances for changing Europe into a continent of peace and security increased.

It is therefore no surprise that the forces of reaction, restorationism and revanchism tried to prevent the creation of such a German state. When this did not succeed they made every effort to do away with it. By now, however, it has become an undeniable fact that the GDR is a politically stable socialist state with a dynamic economy and a modern educational system, in which the sciences and the arts flourish, a state which implements and scrupulously defends the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

The birth of the GDR had become a historical necessity for various national and international reasons. Since the liberation from Nazi rule in May 1945 we antifascists had fought with all our strength for a unified peace-loving and democratic German state.

Our fight for such a state on an antifascist democratic basis corresponded fully with the aims of the anti-Hitler coalition and the Potsdam Agreement. I want to lay special emphasis on these facts because various influential circles in the USA, Great Britain and France had designed all kinds of plans for the dismemberment of Germany during the Second World War. I shall

mention only the infamous Morgenthau Plan as an example. Whatever intentions had been at the bottom of this and other plans—one was the desire to get rid of German monopoly capitalism as an unwanted competitor on the world market and in the struggle for world domination—they all had one thing in common. They disregarded the vital interests of the German people. If none of these plans found its way into the Allied agreements of 1945 this is exclusively due to the Soviet Union and its insistence on a peaceful democratic future for the German people.

In the Eastern parts of Germany radical antifascist democratic changes laid the foundation for a German state committed to peace, true democracy and social progress. In this the Soviet Union, in accordance with the undertakings of the Potsdam Agreement, offered comprehensive support.

When the imperialist powers and big business circles in the Western zones saw that on our side the revolutionary changes were making progress despite all difficulties, they realised that a united imperialist Germany was no longer achievable. They therefore acted on the principle: "Rather all of half of Germany than half of all of Germany." The Western occupation powers in league with German big business interests took decisions which had serious consequences for the German people, for democracy and social progress, peace and security in Europe. Against the Soviet Union's protest and in violation of the resolutions of the Allied Control Council, the British and American zones of occupation were merged into ■ "bi-zone" and ■ Bizonal Economic Council established on 1 January 1947. These were measures in preparation for the establishment of ■ separate West German state.

In the Western zones neither the big agricultural estates nor monopoly capitalism were eliminated, even though 72 per cent of the voters in the Hesse referendum of December 1946 had pronounced themselves in favour and most of the West German *Länder* (states) had passed laws and directives for their elimination. The reactionary state apparatus, the bourgeois bureaucracy and the employers' federations remained largely intact, and reactionary ideology again found wide dissemination. These facts made immediately apparent the nature of the planned state.

In February 1948, by order of the American and British military governors, the bizonal administration was remodelled and given the characteristics of ■ separate *de facto* government. A little later, on 1 March 1948, the military governments of the USA and Great Britain stopped trade, rail transport and transit traffic between the Western Zones and the Soviet zone

of occupation completely. On 20 June 1948 the Western powers ordered a separate currency reform in the Western zones which was soon extended to include the Western sectors of Berlin. Now that the historical economic unity had been destroyed and the socio-economic separation practically completed, the uniform German currency was torn up.

But this was still not enough. In July 1948 the Western occupation powers gave orders to the ministers of the West German *Länder* to create a separate state in the Western zones. On 1 August 1948 the French zone of occupation was merged with the American and British zones into the "tri-zone". Finally, on 1 September 1948 they set up the so-called Parliamentary Council. In May 1949 the latter passed the *Grundgesetz* (constitution) which had been bargained over behind the backs of the people—against the votes of the KPD's representatives. This was based on the occupation statute of 12 May 1949 and was in direct contravention of the Potsdam Agreement. With the installation of the Bundestag in Bonn on 7 September 1949 and the formation of a coalition government under Konrad Adenauer, made up of representatives of the CDU, CSU, FDP and the DP, the political split became final. The right-wing leaders of the SPD also carry a heavy load of responsibility for this. Their chairman, Kurt Schumacher, had declared the partition of Germany a fact as early as October 1947 and had called for a separate West German state.

In 1948 I travelled again—actually for the last time—into the Western zones. I spoke at meetings and rallies about the impending split-up of Germany and about the necessity of averting this danger by means of a broad-based popular movement. In Duisburg I appeared together with Max Reimann. On this occasion I also visited my parents and sisters at Wiebelskirchen. The Saarland had once again been put under French administration in December 1946.

My party, the SED, the other democratic parties and mass organizations had—as soon as the first signs of the split appeared—done everything to save German unity. On the initiative of the SED the "People's Congress Movement for Unity and a Just Peace" was created. It comprised citizens from all sections of the population and also had many sympathisers in the Western zones. However, the Western occupation powers banned this movement and persecuted its followers.

I was a delegate at the first German People's Congress on 6/7 December 1947 in the building then housing the Deutsche Staatsoper, now the Metropol theatre, in Berlin's Friedrichstrasse where 2,215 members of the antifas-

cist democratic parties, trade unions and other mass organisations, works' councils, representatives from agriculture, science and the arts from all parts of Germany had gathered. The congress was the first all-German representative gathering of our people since the end of the Second World War. It demanded the formation of a central German government made up of representatives of all democratic parties and the election of a national assembly. The proposal, repeatedly submitted by the SED, to hold a referendum on the political and economic unity of Germany was supported. A delegation elected by the congress, to which I belonged, was to submit to the Council of Foreign Ministers, who were meeting from 25 November to 15 December 1947 in London, the German ideas regarding a peace treaty and the re-establishment of state unity. It was refused entry into Great Britain. This cast a telling reflection on the attitude of the Western powers. Even more telling was the fact that the foreign ministers of the Western powers opposed a suggestion by the USSR to conclude a democratic peace treaty with Germany and to form a German government immediately. They demanded a revision of the Potsdam Agreement and finally staged the breakdown of the conference.

In spring 1948, after it had become more and more obvious that the Western powers in league with reactionary circles in the Western zones were destroying German unity systematically in all fields of social life, it became more and more urgent to appeal for national self-help. This task was taken on by the second People's Congress which met on 17 and 18 March 1948. I was one of the members of the German People's Council which was elected by this congress and one of its chairmen. The congress called for a referendum to let the people decide the question of Germany's unity.

About 14.7 million citizens of voting age registered for the referendum between 23 May and 13 June 1948. This represents about 38 per cent of the enfranchised population of all zones. Despite a ban on the referendum by the American, British and French military governments, about 1.5 million citizens registered even in the Western zones. The legal prerequisites for a referendum therefore existed. The executive of the German People's Council discussed the results of the referendum thoroughly on 7 July 1948 and requested the chiefs of the four occupation authorities to approve a decision by the people. Significantly, the military governments of the Western zones did not even take note of the request. Only the SMAD supported our cause.

The patriotic forces of our people found reliable allies in their struggle

for the democratic unity of the country in the Soviet Union and the people's democracies. At a foreign ministers' conference in Warsaw on 23/24 June 1948 the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary condemned the separate negotiations of the Western powers in London in February/March and April/June 1948 and the results of the same ■ ■ gross violation of the agreements between the member states of the anti-Hitler coalition. The conference demanded joint measures on the part of the four occupation powers to secure the complete demilitarization of Germany and the prevention of the re-establishment of the war potential of German imperialism. They supported the People's Congress movement in its effort to form a democratic government and to conclude a peace treaty on the basis of international law as expressed in the Potsdam Agreement.

At the Paris conference of the foreign ministers of the USSR, the USA, France and Great Britain which opened on 23 May 1949, the Soviet delegation took up a firm position against the partitioning policy of the Western powers. It demanded a return to the principles of the Potsdam Agreement, the drafting of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of occupation forces. Further it proposed that a delegation from the German People's Council be received. This proposal found strong resonance among large sections of the German population. The FDGB supported it on behalf of its several million members. About 2,000 delegates at the third parliament of the FDJ at Leipzig from 1 to 5 June 1949 demanded in a telegram to the foreign ministers' conference that the delegation of the German People's Congress be received which was also authorised to speak on behalf of German youth.

Everyone of us felt in spring 1949 that the struggle for a united democratic German state had entered a decisive phase. On 15/16 May 1949 general, direct and secret elections for the third German People's Congress took place in the Soviet-occupied zone and in the democratic sector of Berlin. By means of bans and persecutions free democratic elections in the Western zones and the Western sectors of Berlin were made impossible.

Out of over 12.8 million voters more than 7.9 million, that is roughly two thirds, voted for the tickets put forward jointly by all political parties and mass organisations. I was also reelected.

On 29/30 May 1949 the third German People's Congress met in Berlin. It elected ■ new People's Council and confirmed the draft constitution for a German democratic republic. This draft, in the preparation of which I had taken part, had come about on the initiative of the SED in the course of

1948 and had been submitted to the population in all parts of Germany for discussion. In contrast to the Bonn *Grundgesetz* which had been put together behind closed doors, excluding the working population, our draft constitution was discussed publicly on a broad democratic basis. At more than 9,000 meetings, in newspapers and on the air it was discussed by the population. 15,000 resolutions and 503 amendments were received by the German People's Council. The 1,969 delegates to the third People's Congress from all zones of occupation appealed to the German people to prevent, at the 11th hour, the political detachment of the Western zones and their integration in an imperialist pact system directed against the Soviet Union and the other socialist states.

The new People's Council had 330 members, among them 90 from the SED, 45 from the CDU, 45 from the LDPD, 15 from the Democratic Peasants' Party (DBD), 15 from the National Democratic Party (NDPD) and five from the Berlin SPD. The FDGB had 30, the FDJ 10, the DFD 10, the Cultural Federation for the Democratic Renewal of Germany (KB) also 10, the Association for Mutual Peasants' Aid (VdGB) 5, the VVN 10 and the agricultural cooperatives five representatives in the council. In addition there were 35 independent members.

The People's Congress movement enlarged its ranks and began to develop into a comprehensive national front. All strata of the population were united in it, the spectrum ranging from the working class to patriotically minded representatives of the bourgeoisie. The SED party executive decided on 4 October 1949 to consult with the other democratic parties and mass organisations about the formation of a provisional government for a German democratic republic. A document entitled "The national front of democratic Germany and the SED" was approved. Henceforth this was the common platform of all patriotic forces of the German people.

The executive of the German People's Council and the bloc of antifascist democratic parties in a joint consultation called a meeting of the German People's Council for 7 October 1949. A decision of historic importance had to be taken.

At the 4 October meeting of the SED leadership mentioned above, the Chairman of the SED, Wilhelm Pieck, had declared: "We have pondered for a long time whether we should come forward with the proposal for the formation of a government of the German Democratic Republic ... The situation is so serious that we can no longer put off this step." Millions of working people in the Soviet zone of occupation demanded at rallies and

demonstrations, in resolutions and letters to the SED and the German People's Council to form a democratic German republic immediately. The parties and mass organisations took the calls by all those millions of people into account. On behalf of the FDJ I expressed the expectation in a letter to the German People's Council that immediate steps be taken towards the formation of a government for all of Germany.

At the time we faced the question of whether to strengthen the antifascist democratic structure and to continue systematically the revolutionary reformation in the direction of socialism or to give up the anti-imperialist democratic achievements and to permit the restoration of a monopoly capitalist setup. Logically enough we decided for the former and founded our own workers' and peasants' state. In doing this we were acting in line with the requirements of the epoch of worldwide transition from capitalism to socialism. At the time this was the only possible answer in response to the splitting-up of Germany by the forces of counterrevolutionary restoration of German and international monopoly capitalism. It was our aim to create, in accordance with the lessons taught by a century in which German imperialism had twice unleashed devastating world wars, a state in which the socio-economic, political and intellectual roots of imperialism, militarism and fascism would be done away with for good. All power should be put into the hands of the working people, and the highest principle of foreign policy would be peace and friendship among nations.

On 7 October 1949 the German People's Council met in Berlin under the chairmanship of Wilhelm Pieck. Upon a proposal by the SED, the other bloc parties and mass organisations the People's Council constituted itself as the provisional Volkskammer (parliament) of the German Democratic Republic. The delegates enacted the constitution which had been confirmed by the third German People's Congress. It confirmed the results of the antifascist democratic reformation since the liberation from Nazism. The revolutionary achievements became principles of the constitution: exercise of state power by the working class in league with the peasantry and other working people; stripping monopoly capitalism and big estate owners of their power; the creation of a nationalised sector of the economy; the role of the trade unions as the biggest class organisation of the working people; the right to work and education; and equal rights for women and for the Sorb national minority. The fundamental rights of youth which had been announced in 1946 became principles of the constitution as well. For the first time in German history the constitution secured for all young people over the age

of 18 an unlimited right of political co-determination, the right to work, education, recreation and happiness.

For me and all the others involved it was a moving moment when we performed the historic act of founding the GDR. With it came true all that the revolutionary German workers' movement, the best forces of our people had ever fought for.

According to the constitution the majority parliamentary party had to nominate the prime minister. The SED proposed Otto Grotewohl, chairman of the SED. He undertook to form the government.

On orders from the government of the USSR the chief of the SMAD, General V. I. Chuikov, handed over the administrative functions so far exercised by the Soviet Military Administration to the organs of the GDR state. In doing this the CPSU and the Soviet government continued their internationalist policy towards the German people.

11 October 1949 is one of the unforgettable days of my life. Once again the enormous changes which had taken place in the Eastern parts of Germany since the victory of the Soviet army and its allies over Hitlerism were made dazzlingly apparent.

I remember it well. The day began with a consultation among leading activists at the FDJ's Central Council. We had many questions on our minds. After all, for the first time hundreds of thousands of boys and girls who had distinguished themselves in the antifascist democratic reformation and the development of our united youth organisation were to come to Berlin, the capital of our newly founded republic, for a joint manifestation. Would they arrive in time in Berlin despite the still difficult traffic situation? What frame of mind would they be in?

A few hours later, on my way to a joint session of the provisional Volkskammer and the provisional Länderkammer we could already sense the expectant atmosphere. At several points in the city we encountered young people in their blue blouses carrying the flags of the FDJ from which the symbol of the rising sun shone. With streamers and shouting choruses they welcomed the foundation of the GDR. Cultural groups appeared. New youth songs were sung, particularly often one which said: "Rebuild, rebuild! Free German Youth rebuild! For a better future our homeland we rebuild!" This confirmed my conviction that the work we had done in the early years was bearing positive fruit. I told myself that young people who sang like this must feel that something decisive for the future was being done.

When I think back I relive the joy that we all felt when Wilhelm Pieck

was unanimously elected President of the GDR. Amid thunderous applause the youngest of the delegates, Margot Feist, a member of the FDJ parliamentary group, congratulated Wilhelm Pieck on his election to this high office on behalf of all members of the supreme representative body of the people.

In his maiden speech the first President of the GDR declared: "Today we have reached the turning-point in German history. Thanks to the untiring work of the best forces of the German people and the great help extended to us by the Soviet government we are undertaking the first steps towards independent statehood for the German people. Let us make sure in responsible, loyal and friendly cooperation that we can live up to the greatness of the political tasks and that we shall not be found wanting when history passes judgement."

Towards the end of the day we went to the August-Bebel-Platz. At this historic site on Unter den Linden, where in November 1918 sailors of the Volksmarine division and revolutionary workers had joined Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in the fight for a socialist German republic, a good thirty years later one million Berliners and working people from all parts of the republic gathered. Together with 200,000 delegates of the FDJ they celebrated the election of the joiner and Communist Wilhelm Pieck to the office of president and demonstrated their solidarity with the first German workers' and peasants' state. In the evening Berlin experienced the mightiest rally of postwar times. The faces of the people beamed with confidence. They shouted: "Long live the GDR!" "We are building the future!" "We thank the Soviet Union!" "The workers defend their republic!"

The platform onto which Wilhelm Pieck and the other representatives of the workers' and peasants' power stepped amid the applause of tens of thousands of people was decorated with red and black-red-gold flags and flowers. Wherever one looked one saw the flames of torches. Their glow lit up the night sky. After the singing of the March of Democratic Youth Berlin's mayor, Friedrich Ebert, opened the rally with a cordial speech. Time and again he was interrupted by shouts of "Long live our Wilhelm." My turn to speak as chairman of the FDJ came and I presented to Wilhelm Pieck in this hour the "vow of German youth". It ended with the solemn declaration: "We, the German youth, pledge our allegiance to the GDR because it aims to and shall bring peace and a better life to the young ... We want to be master builders in the construction of our new house of peaceful work and assertive human values."

Greatly moved, Wilhelm Pieck thanked those assembled in a brief address.

The demonstration was led by representatives of the FDJ from Berlin and Saxony. They carried a streamer reading "Long live the GDR!" Another highlight was the parade by thousands of Young Pioneers in their blue scarves. Thousands of members of the FDJ from various *Länder* of the FRG, who had joined the demonstration with the slogan "The youth of West Germany greets the GDR", were applauded.

Almost three hours had passed when a further highlight was reached. The delegates from the German People's Police welcomed their republic. In their ranks I recognised not a few activists of the youth federation who had considered it their duty to protect our young state from the beginning against all attacks. At the end of the demonstration the old workers' song "Brothers, towards the sun, towards freedom" was sung.

I remember that there were also some foreign guests on the platform. Among them were representatives of the military missions and foreign journalists. What we experienced that night caused some of them surprise and astonishment. One could not help overhearing the question: How is it possible that ■ youth which has been so much abused and misled by Nazism should pledge its allegiance to the new, to the GDR, with such fervour?

For those of us who had worked for the SED among the young generation since the foundation of the FDJ this question confirmed above all the fundamental attitude of the Communists in having full confidence in young people and including them actively in the social reformation. This attitude had proved itself to be sound, even crucially necessary. Wilhelm Pieck had been right when, in November 1945 at the already mentioned gathering of representatives of the antifascist youth committees, he had exhorted us to the effect that Communists base their attitude towards the young on the conviction that they must be won for Marxism-Leninism, for human love and human happiness, for the peace and freedom of mankind. When the young are given responsibility in this sense they will be willing to fight for these goals.

The young people who were demonstrating here had had the opportunity during the years of antifascist democratic transformation to convince themselves of the new meaning of their lives. They had experienced how, through their own strength and with the help of the Soviet Union, the consequences of the war were being overcome and living conditions improved.

The attitude of the majority of young people to the GDR was not least determined by the fact that they themselves had contributed to the creation

of this state. Since its foundation the FDJ had won over hundreds of thousands of young people for the creation of a new life. The youth federation numbered more than 900,000 members at the time the GDR was founded. Full of confidence and passion they worked for the creation of antifascist democratic conditions, and for the implementation of the fundamental rights of the young generation and its education in the spirit of peace, humanism and friendship among nations.

It was an important requirement for the foundation of the GDR to give the workers' and peasants' state a stable socio-economic and material-technological foundation. However, this could only be achieved by accelerated production and increased labour productivity in the nationally owned factories. There was no other way but to develop a new attitude towards work among all the working people, particularly the young. For this reason I argued within my party, the SED, that all branches and committees should arouse the willingness of the young to confront new challenges and set to work at crucial sectors of the democratic reconstruction effort.

The Central Council of the FDJ concentrated on activating the work of the FDJ's basic units in the nationally owned factories. Like all workers, the young had to be made aware of the fact that they had become the owners of these factories and that it was in their interest to increase production and labour productivity and to augment the national wealth.

The opponents of the antifascist democratic transformation missed no opportunity of encouraging the opinion which was widespread among a large part of the population and which might be summed up in the words: "Let's first eat more and then work more." But there was only one way out of the vicious circle: first produce more, then live better. We concentrated on this. In order to win over the young first of all I suggested the formation of young activist groups and youth work brigades, first in industry and then also in agriculture. At the same time I proposed that the members of the youth federation should put themselves at the head of the activist and competition movement which had been started in 1947. Many of these groups and brigades spurred by their example other young people to match their performance. At the beginning of 1948 we had about 450 groups and about 4,000 young activists.

In order to enable others to profit from their experience and to spread the activist movement, the Central Council of the FDJ decided in January 1948 upon a suggestion I had made to call a congress of young workers

from the nationally owned factories. It took place at Zeitz on 11/12 April 1948 and went down in the history of both the FDJ and the GDR as the first young activist congress. The speakers at this congress included Otto Grotewohl, chairman of the SED, and Walter Ulbricht, its deputy chairman. I appealed to the youth to develop the activist movement into a mass movement of youth. I declared: "Youth in East Germany now stands on the rubble of a world which had degraded the worker to slave status, which exploited him; but it also stands at the beginning of a new and constructive period. Now for the first time in history our working youth has every opportunity to influence and mould political and social life. We believe that the young activist movement will develop into a great mass movement of German working youth if we continue the work we started with vigour and enthusiasm."

A year later, not least on account of a pioneering achievement by the miner Adolf Hennecke on 13 October 1948, the number of young activists had already risen to about 20,000. I had many talks with young workers in factories and encouraged them to assume responsibility for economically important projects. We wanted to give the young confidence, to have them test their abilities and to understand from their own experience the power that comes from common effort. In view of the transition to central planning in the Soviet zone of occupation under the second two-year plan for 1949/50 and the still tense economic situation this was particularly important. Therefore the Central Council of the FDJ called upon youth to spearhead the campaign for the fulfilment of the plan and to take on additional tasks.

Many examples could be cited of the growing productive attitude of youth at this time. I would like to emphasise some of them. Many young workers, schoolchildren and students, predominantly members of the youth federation, responded to the call by the Central Council of the FDJ at the end of 1948 to build, as a voluntary project, a five-kilometre water pipeline from the Saale river to the Max foundry at Unterwellenborn which at the time was our only blast furnace operation. Under the motto "Max needs water" the young people did the job in 90 days of strenuous work. On 1 April 1949 the water pipeline went into service, making it possible to raise pig iron and steel production considerably.

At the beginning of 1949 thousands of FDJ members set to work following the appeal by the Central Council to build a dam near Sosa in the Erzgebirge destined to supply drinking water to the towns and villages in the vicinity. The members of the youth federation took up my suggestion

to take on complete responsibility for the construction of the Sosa dam with enthusiasm. Since then many projects of importance to the economy have been declared youth projects. In them the young generation has shown its fervour and initiative and tested its creative powers. The most important thing was and remains that they gained experience and understanding which enabled them to master major tasks in the state and the economy, in all fields of social life. Many leading personalities in the party, the state and the economy emerged from the ranks of the builders of such central youth projects.

In agriculture young tractor drivers became the initiators of the young activists' movement; in late autumn 1948 we had introduced publicly-owned machine-hiring stations (MAS) for the support of small and medium farmers. The Central Council had issued an appeal: "FDJ members to the tractors!" By the middle of May 1949 nearly 4,600 young people had started work at the machine-hiring stations. On 11 October 1949, that is in the first days after the foundation of our state, Bruno Kiesler, then a FDJ member, now for many years a member of the SED's ZK and head of the agricultural department, got the activist movement going in agriculture.

In many imaginative ways youth was in the forefront of the work of reconstruction. Through creative work they helped prepare the way for the foundation of the GDR.

Not only in production did the young lend a hand, however. As we knew how much culture, literature and art enriched intellectual life, and how deeply these influenced and refined humanist, progressive thinking, we in the SED party leadership attached great importance to this aspect of youth work. In this we were supported by such outstanding writers and artists as Johannes R. Becher, Bertolt Brecht, Willi Bredel, Kurt Barthel (Kuba), Jan Koplowitz, Wolfgang Langhoff, Ernst Legal, Hans Marchwitza, Otto Nagel, Anna Seghers, Gustav von Wangenheim and Friedrich Wolf. Literary works by Maxim Gorki, Vladimir Mayakovski, Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Sholokhov, Leo Tolstoi, Alexei Tolstoi and Nikolai Chernyshevski, by Louis Aragon, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Howard Fast, John Galsworthy, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, Herman Melville, Upton Sinclair, William Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde and many other representatives of world culture helped many a young person to find a new meaning in life. The first films produced by the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), which had been founded in May 1946, such as *The Murderers are Among Us* or *Marriage*

in *the Shadow*, effectively supported the process of coming to terms with the recent past. Nikolai Ostrovski's book *How the Steel Was Tempered* and Valentin Katayev's *Lonely White Sail* had lasting effects.

In order to give the cultural work of the youth federation further impulses the Central Council of the FDJ and the publishing house Neues Leben had issued an invitation for an authors' gathering in mid-October 1948. Sixty-eight authors and more than 200 young people, among them many young activists, took part. I asked the authors to take a greater interest in the problems of young people, to write about their struggle for a new life. This was necessary because we not only wanted to awaken among the young enthusiasm for the achievement of the economic plan but also to give them an optimistic view of life on a realistic basis. This could best be achieved through books, films, the theatre and the columns of the press. Friedrich Wolf advised the writers to go to the youth in factories and schools and see for themselves how the new life was developing there.

On the occasion of Goethe's 200th birthday the FDJ had organized a Goethe festival of German youth on 21/22 March 1949 at the National Theatre in Weimar. At the opening I gave an outline of the youth federation's attitude to Goethe's heritage. I said that it was not by accident that the FDJ had taken charge of this event, thus being the first youth organisation to give men of letters the opportunity of bringing Goethe to the young generation. In its struggle to win youth for the ideals of democracy and peace, and to make accessible to all the best in German and foreign culture, the FDJ was fully aware of the great importance that attached to the knowledge of Goethe's work.

Otto Grotewohl spoke about the life and work of this great German humanist. In his speech, whose theme of "Anvil or hammer" he had borrowed from the poet, he sought to rouse the enthusiasm of the young for the legacy of humanist thought and encouraged them to persist in realising it. "You, German youth," he called, "must either rise or sink. You must master the dark powers which in the past have abused you and led you from catastrophe to catastrophe. You must win your freedom, your future, your independence and your peace ... You must not be the anvil but the hammer!"

This was what the decisions in those historic days were all about. All previous states in German history had educated and abused the young to serve minorities of exploiters and oppressors and finally to die on the battlefields for their own power interests. There was a deep-rooted desire

amongst the young that our new state should follow a policy which was in accord with their interests, which would never permit another war, which would fundamentally change their lives for the good and enable them to take their fate into their own hands.

What many in our country, among them many young people, had hoped for became a certainty on 12 October 1949. Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl expounded the government's programme before the Volkskammer. It was a programme of work for economic reconstruction and material security, democracy and social progress, a programme of struggle for peace, friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, the people's democracies and all peace-loving nations. Now more than thirty years have proved that the GDR has implemented these principles and goals to the full. Our state of workers and peasants provided the guarantee of this.

Speaking on behalf of the young on 12 October 1949, I declared our unconditional approval of the government's programme before the highest representative assembly of the people, of which I have been a member since the foundation of the GDR. I was able to do this because I was certain that the principles and goals of the government's policy completely concurred with the vital interests of our people. There had never been such harmony between the people and their government in the history of our country. I therefore declared my conviction that the protection of the interests of the young generation was in good hands with the Grotewohl government and that the FDJ would always stand by this government.

On 14 October 1949 the Central Council of the FDJ discussed the new tasks of the FDJ after the foundation of the GDR. With great joy I was able to welcome Wilhelm Pieck to the opening. My suggestion to make him an honorary member and honorary president of the FDJ was greeted with thunderous applause. I declared: "We believe that it is of great importance that a man like Wilhelm Pieck should be at the head of our state. In Wilhelm Pieck we honour not only the example and the teacher of the young generation, not only the friend and helper of the young generation, but the sound and positive traditions of the German people altogether."

Visibly moved, Wilhelm Pieck responded to his election as honorary president of the FDJ. "The FDJ has shown on various great occasions, time and again, what it means in the life of our people. I remember ... that wonderful evening of 11 October in Unter den Linden when the FDJ expressed its great and close identification with the events that were taking place in those days. And this is how it shall remain. We want to rely on

the FDJ in the execution of all the great tasks we have before us, and they are no mean ones."

Today, with the 30th anniversary of the GDR still fresh in my memory, I can say with a clear conscience that the foundation of the GDR had clearly paved the way for the victory of socialism and peace on German soil. Certainly many in our own country and abroad had not fully recognised the historic significance of this event. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, J. V. Stalin, described it in a telegram to the government of the GDR on 13 October 1949 as follows: "The foundation of the German democratic peace-loving republic marks a turning-point in European history." The events of the past three decades bear this out. The GDR has proved itself an essential factor of peace, security and social progress in Europe.

Along the road upon which the best sons and daughters of the German people, revolutionaries, humanists and democrats, generation after generation had embarked, and on which they had fought with courage and self-sacrifice for a better future, we were now advancing victoriously with the foundation of the GDR. It had been opened to us thanks to the destruction of fascism. We, at any rate, had made use of the historic chance that arose with the liberation by the Soviet Union and the other powers of the anti-Hitler coalition in spring 1945. In the GDR there was now taking shape what German antifascists had risked their lives for in the underground, in prisons and concentration camps, in exile and on other fronts of the battle against Nazi barbarism and war. Their legacy is in reliable hands.



With young construction trainees on the Block E-Süd building site
at the Weberwiese in Berlin, early July 1952.

XIV

Youth for socialism and peace

Since its foundation close ties between the state and youth, between the government and the young generation, have been characteristic of the GDR. One of the first laws, passed by the Volkskammer on 8 February 1950, was the youth law introduced by Walter Ulbricht, or more precisely, the law on participation of the young in the development of the GDR and furtherance of the young in schools and jobs, in sports and recreation. As chairman of the youth committee of the Volkskammer I was happy to be able to ask the members with a clear conscience to approve it. In this law the “fundamental rights of the young generation”, which the FDJ had fought for, were laid down and expanded.

It was different from such forms of “youth care” as were not unknown in capitalist states in that it provided not just individual incentives but gave the young generation co-responsibility in the broadest sense of the word. It was ■ policy not just for youth but with youth and by youth. The FDJ was given the right to develop its initiatives in all fields of social life. More rights and more duties meant also new and higher demands on us.

Three decades later I can say that it has been confirmed time and again how right it was to show confidence in the young and to give them responsibility. We held to this with the second youth law which the Volkskam-

mer of the GDR passed on the motion of my party in May 1964. Meanwhile the third youth law to follow this principle has been enacted. The young in the GDR have proved themselves worthy of it in the most varied situations and in the most varied fields. For many citizens of our country who now perform great services ■ leaders in the state and the economy, as activists in the party and mass organisations, or as scientists and artists, the first youth law paved the way for the application of their talents both for their own personal satisfaction and for the benefit of the community.

The Volkskammer also concerned itself with the rights of women and care for mothers. It saw to the improvement of the social situation of agricultural workers. Nowadays, when in virtually all capitalist countries unemployment is rampant and the ruling circles there and the employers' associations cite countless reasons why there cannot be ■ guaranteed right to work, it becomes even more obvious what a great achievement our first labour law represented. Passed on 19 April 1950, in the first year of the GDR's existence, it guaranteed every working person an acceptable job according to his or her qualifications and equal pay for equal work performance. At the time and in contrast to today we had no shortage of manpower but had to create jobs. Our youth federation undertook above all to make sure that every young person could learn a trade and was given ■ sound training.

With the foundation of the GDR and the first steps taken by the new state social development was more and more determined by emerging socialist elements. The revolutionary process moved into its socialist stage. The antifascist democratic reformation was followed by the socialist revolution.

The transition would have been impossible without the establishment of the workers' and peasants' power, the results of the antifascist democratic reformation, the help and protection extended by the Soviet Union, and the solidarity of the whole socialist camp. We were able to implement it step by step and we were spared the necessity of having to break down armed resistance by reactionary forces. In its principles and objectives of 1946 the SED had set its sights on the revolutionary transformation of society in a democratic way, by peaceful means. This too took place in the course of acute class struggle. There was still a considerable private sector in the economy from which the danger of capitalist restoration emanated. There were forces which were working towards the return of monopoly capitalist power and ownership structures. They had their contact men even in leading positions in the state and the economy. Our party was prepared to use

various forms of struggle in the continuation of the revolution, including the use of armed force if the bourgeoisie strayed from the principles of democracy.

In the FRG we were facing a state whose ruling circles and dominating interest groups considered it only a question of time before the GDR would collapse or, on account of internal crises, would be ripe for annexation. Apart from the socialist countries, no other state had recognised the GDR. Too great was the pressure being exercised by the Western powers who were trying to isolate the GDR by means of a diplomatic blockade and by calling its sovereignty, indeed even its existence, into question. Of course, we could from the beginning count on the socialist countries and many other friends around the world, particularly the communist and workers' parties and other progressive movements. But they did not determine government policy in their states. Thus the GDR started on its way—heavily disadvantaged economically in comparison to the FRG. Through the stubborn labour of its citizens it rose to join the ranks of the most efficient industrial nations and to occupy a respected place in the community of peace-loving nations.

It was at the SED's Third Congress of 20-24 July 1950 that the situation was thoroughly assessed, and in its resolutions the course of the party and our country was laid down for this new stage of development. It underlined the GDR's great responsibility in the struggle for peace. The party congress exposed the various dangers resulting from the projected remilitarisation of the FRG. These were to be countered by the democratic struggle of all patriots for a united, peace-loving, progressive German state as envisaged in the Potsdam Agreement. At this party congress we established the first five-year plan for the years 1951 to 1955 and laid down the directives not only for the economic but also for the whole social development of the first half of the fifties. The plan's basic purpose was to lay the foundation for socialism. Two years later in July 1952 the second party conference of the SED declared that creating the foundations for socialism had become the central task.

For me the third party congress was an important event in more than one respect. The first meeting of its ZK adopted me as a candidate member of its Politbureau on 25 July 1950. At the age of 38 I was the youngest in a collective body of workers' leaders to which the SED's chairmen, Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, and the general secretary of the ZK, Walter Ulbricht, belonged as well as such respected activists as Franz Dählem, Friedrich Ebert, Hermann Matern, Fred Oelssner, Heinrich Rau and Wil-

helm Zaisser as members, and Anton Ackermann, Hans Jendretzky, Erich Mückenberger and Elli Schmidt as candidate members. I was linked to all these comrades by years of joint political activity. We all had fought against Nazism. Whether in the KPD or the SPD, after liberation from Nazism we had jointly taken the road of antifascist democratic reformation, the road to the German Democratic Republic. In the process we had grown and matured. In this collective body there converged experiences from various stages of the struggle, from different fields of political, economic and cultural life.

Work in the Politbureau was for me a task which far exceeded the measure of responsibility which I had known so far, because here policy in its totality was on the agenda. I now belonged to the collective body which in our socialist structure carries prime responsibility for analysing the political situation thoroughly, weighing all possibilities and preparing and taking decisions both on questions of basic strategy and on current issues.

Even though I was now a candidate member of the Politbureau my prime function remained that of chairman of the FDJ. With the first five-year plan the economic initiatives of the FDJ gained even more prominence in our activities. We wanted to win over all youth for conscious participation in the building of socialism.

A firm economic foundation for the GDR—this was the most effective contribution towards securing peace in Europe. For an economically unstable, politically vulnerable workers' and peasants' state could only be an encouragement to those imperialist adventurers who were waiting to wipe the GDR off the political map as soon as possible. At the same time we owed it to the working people of our country to help them attain, after the years of war, hunger and deprivation, a socially secure life and steadily improving working and living conditions. This could only be achieved by hard work.

As part of what had previously been an economic whole, the economy of the GDR had been closely linked with what was now the economic organism of the Federal Republic. For this reason our economy was at first strongly dependent on imports of raw materials, machines, equipment, semi-finished goods and spare parts from the FRG. What happened was what all socialist states had experienced and what repeats itself whenever a country takes the road of social progress. Imperialism intensified its economic blockade, its policy of causing massive economic damage. In our case such attempts at blackmail came mainly from the FRG. During the first half of 1951 it reduced trade to 200 million marks. By the second half of

1952 it had dropped to a mere nine million. This was only a fraction of the prewar trade between the territories which now belonged to the GDR and the FRG respectively, which had amounted to between six and eight thousand million Reichsmarks.

The GDR suffered great damage from the drain of scientists, university and college graduates and skilled workers. Certainly, some of those who left the GDR did so for political reasons. Not infrequently those concerned the individual's Nazi past, a greed for gain that could not be satisfied in our country, bourgeois capitalist concepts of life, or lack of sympathy for our socialist goals. Yet there were also some blunders on the part of this or that government agency. However, our opponents west of the border employed massive means to "bleed" the GDR. Not a few were misled, some "escapees from the republic" were also looking for what they thought was an easier and faster way to material well-being. The "West" seemed to offer this, and so, owing to its greater economic potential and Marshall Plan credits, to a certain degree it did.

The FDJ continued its well-tried practice of taking over important schemes as youth projects. I was often invited by young people who were working on the construction of the Ost iron foundry, the biggest and most important project in the first five-year plan. Or I would visit the apprentices who erected the high-rise apartment building at Berlin's Weberwiese as a youth project or the builders of the Trattendorf power station which the FDJ had taken under its wing. Everywhere there was consent and action when we appealed to them to attack all difficulties with courage, to overcome bureaucratic obstacles and also to create, in organising their work, possibilities for cultural and sports activities. Such encounters gave me many ideas that were worth passing on to the activists of the youth federation.

We learned more and more how to awaken the initiative of the young. In the struggle for the economic strengthening of the GDR, the working youth showed itself to be the force which was shaping the characteristics of our youth federation. The role it played was still further enhanced when SED and FDJ called a campaign for the acquisition of science and culture. The Central Council, upon my suggestion, instituted a "Badge for Good Knowledge" for the award of which many FDJ members have worked year after year since 1950. The time had come to call on the members of the youth federation to study Marxism-Leninism. For those FDJ activists who like myself had come from the revolutionary workers' youth it was not difficult to demonstrate the value of the scientific view of the world, that

is knowledge of the laws which govern the development of nature and society. It also corresponded to the experience of many younger people that if they strove for more knowledge they would be able to shape socialism in our country, and hence in their own lives as well, with still more insight and conviction. The FDJ matured politically and ideologically. In April 1957 the Central Council was able to announce that the FDJ had developed into a socialist youth federation.

Equally, the children's section of the FDJ, the Federation of Young Pioneers which had been founded on 13 December 1948, made good progress. With their open-mindedness and liveliness they proved all those doubters wrong who had thought that politics should be kept away from children. By mid-1949 the Federation of Young Pioneers had 550,000 members. Chairwoman of the organisation from 1949 to 1953 was Margot Feist. She had grown up in a working-class family; her father had become a Communist ■ a young man and had taken part in the antifascist resistance struggle. She had joined the ranks of the KPD in 1945 and had been an FDJ activist since 1946.

It was a great joy for me when at the first gathering of the Federation of Young Pioneers from 18 to 25 August 1952 in Dresden Hermann Matern on behalf of the Politbureau of the SED's ZK and in the presence of Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl and Rosa Thälmann, wife of the unforgettable workers' leader, bestowed on it the name of the Ernst Thälmann Pioneer Organisation. It could be seen that the revolutionary youth policy of our party, which had been initiated by Karl Liebknecht and further developed by Ernst Thälmann and for which I had always worked as a Young Communist and youth activist, was bearing fruit. The tens of thousands who surrounded us at Dresden would fulfil Thälmann's legacy. Of this I was sure during those moving hours.

When I remember the years of my activity as chairman of the FDJ my thoughts often dwell on the big youth gatherings. They manifested the young generation's determination to strengthen their workers' and peasants' state, to defend peace, to maintain friendship with the Soviet Union, the other socialist states and progressive youth all over the world.

At the end of May 1950 an All-Germany youth gathering took place in Berlin. Those were lively, exciting days. Hundreds of thousands came together in the capital of the GDR. They arrived with fulfilled production commitments and good study results. They had collected millions of signatures for the Stockholm appeal for the banning of the atom bomb.

On 25 May 1950 a congress of young peace fighters was held at Berlin's Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle in which more than 7,900 delegates, about 2,000 of them from the FRG, and prominent personalities from at home and abroad took part, among them Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Friedrich Ebert, Walter Ulbricht, Max Reimann, Rosa Thälmann, Anna Seghers, Arnold Zweig, Ilya Ehrenburg, N. A. Mikhailov, first secretary of the Komsomol, Guy de Boisson, president of the WFDY, and Jacques Denis, secretary general of the WFDY. Stephan Hermlin opened the congress whose purpose he described as "proclaiming to all the world that no idea rouses more enthusiasm among the German youth than the idea of peace".

On 28 May 1950 700,000 young peace fighters joined together in one of the mightiest demonstrations Berlin had ever seen. On their behalf I declared that the youth of our country would never bear arms for imperialist interests and that it would never fight against its liberator, the socialist Soviet Union. In a telegram to J. V. Stalin the delegates of millions of young people confirmed their determination to exert all their might to bring about the banning of the atom bomb, to shirk no effort or exertion in order to thwart the criminal designs of aggressive circles in the West, and never again to permit the German people and its youth to be driven into a war against the Soviet Union, against other socialist countries or against progress. In a telegram to the FDJ's Central Council J. V. Stalin replied: "Thank you for the greetings from the young German peace fighters, the participants in the All-Germany youth gathering. I wish German youth, the builders of a united democratic and peace-loving Germany new successes in this great work."

One year later, from 5 to 19 August 1951, the capital of the GDR was the scene of the third World Festival of Youth and Students. Still marred by the scars of war, Berlin received 26,000 young people from 104 countries. They took part in the youth festival with more than two million FDJ members and 20,000 Young Pioneers as well as 35,000 youths from West Berlin and the FRG where the FDJ had been banned six weeks earlier.

It is hardly possible to describe the feelings of joy and satisfaction with which we had accepted the suggestion of the World Federation of Democratic Youth to hold this world festival in Berlin. It was not long ago that the German youth—pressed into Hitler's army of aggression—had faced other nations ■■ the enemy and invader, little more than half a decade. At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the WFDY which in November 1950 had confirmed its resolution ■■ the third World Festival, I declared: "For German youth the suggestion to hold the third World Festival in Berlin

is a further expression of the help and solidarity which our federation offers to German youth in its struggle for peace and the establishment of democratic unity in their fatherland ... In this hour we want to thank the great socialist Soviet Union which has opened up a new and bright future for our people and its youth. We want to thank the Komsomol and its representatives in the council of our federation, because without the help of the Komsomol our FDJ could not have developed into an organisation comprising millions of young peace fighters which is now capable of taking on such a responsible and honourable mandate."

One would need to experience personally the eagerness with which the FDJ members prepared to be hosts to the world youth and to demonstrate the change which had taken place in our country since the liberation from fascism. In August 1951 for the first time in German history an encounter between German youth and the youth of other countries from all continents was taking place not on the battlefields but on the field of peace and understanding between nations. For many the immediate experience of international solidarity was the strongest impression. The youth from Korea in particular, who were defending their homeland against US aggression, were greeted with an upsurge of sympathy. The young people greeted with love and affection Max Reimann who as chairman of the KPD in the FRG had repeatedly been exposed to persecution and arrest. When on 15 August more than 100,000 young peace fighters demonstrated in West Berlin they got a bitter taste of the political system of capitalism. In brutal police attacks 976 young people were injured. This too was part of the scene in those days.

During the third World Festival I met Enrico Berlinguer, then president of the WFDY, now general secretary of the Italian Communist Party; Jacques Denis, then secretary general of the WFDY, now a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party; Raymonde Dien, whom we admired for her courageous act to prevent an arms shipment for the dirty colonial war against the Vietnamese people; Jupp Angenfort who was then the leader of the FDJ in the FRG and whose hazardous escape from a West German prison was later to make the headlines; and many other comrades and friends who had devoted themselves to the cause of peace and progress.

The FDJ had always considered itself an organisation of young peace fighters. In 1950 it organised a competition with the theme "Ready to work and to defend peace" and a "Peace campaign of the young". At the time many thought that peace and struggle did not go together and even now-

days one comes across this opinion among advocates of peace in some countries. In the course of my activity I have repeatedly stated my opinion on armed force, war and peace, an opinion derived from my view of the world and the experiences of my own life.

We, the Communists, had never been the ones who preferred to see the world armed to the teeth and mankind in a state of constant anxiety at the danger of war, and we never shall be. One of our communist ideals is peace for the benefit of all nations. But we are not pacifists either; we know the essence and the laws of class struggle. They signify that peace can only be achieved by the utmost exertions against the embittered resistance of the forces hostile to it.

I considered the necessity of defending the revolutionary achievements and the socialist development not just as a matter which could be deduced from Marxist-Leninist teaching. Much rather it is, as I have said, an insight derived from personal experience, one that grew up in the class struggles of the twenties and thirties and was confirmed during nearly ten years of Nazi imprisonment. I had personally experienced what it meant to face, unarmed, reactionaries who were armed to the teeth. Many with whom I had joined in battle—Communists, Social Democrats, members of the RFB and the Social Democratic Reichsbanner—had died from the bullets of the hired thugs of the class enemy. The revolutionary process in our country had dangerous adversaries within and without who were just waiting for their hour to come. Therefore we could not do without defence and security forces.

Like all comrades in the SED's ZK and its Politbureau I was convinced that the military issue, the problems of national defence, were among the basic problems of the socialist revolution. I considered it my task to translate our respective resolutions into action in my work at the youth federation. This became more and more urgent in the fifties. For in the FRG dangerous developments were afoot.

At the time I was often asked whether we were not overestimating the threat, whether things were not perhaps only half as bad. When in violation of the Potsdam Agreement those responsible for two devastating world wars were in the process of restoring their economic and political rule this was not the time to play the issues down or to take a lighthearted view of them. The chancellor and the ruling parties of that state announced in this time of marked deterioration of the international situation—there was still war in Korea—their claim to “represent all Germans”. Unashamedly they laid

claim to the territory of the GDR and other socialist countries, sought a revision of the results of the Second World War and called for the “liberation of their brothers and sisters in the Eastern territories”. If at first only the remnants of fascist military power had been preserved, now remilitarisation was well under way. Under the leadership of former Nazi generals like Speidel and Heusinger the army was built up more or less openly following 1950. Today, as we all know, it is NATO’s strongest military force in Western Europe.

For us in the party and state leadership there was no doubt that in view of these facts it would not suffice just to want peace. One had to do something to maintain peace and be ready, if necessary, to protect and defend it by force of arms. With this in mind the Politbureau of the SED had spoken out resolutely against warmongering and preparations for aggression against the Soviet Union as early as March 1949. “In the event of aggression,” it had declared, “the German people must fight the aggressors and support the Soviet army in its efforts to bring about peace.”

In many ways the FDJ contributed to the armed defence of the GDR. It was important to win young people to do voluntary service in the People’s Police stand-by units which in 1952 became the *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* (police reserve), in the border police, the transport police or in the Ministry of State Security. There was no conscription in the GDR until January 1962. Many FDJ activists, among them members and secretaries of the Central Council like Gerhard Heidenreich, Heinz Kessler and Wolfgang Reinhold, set good examples.

I do not remember how many times during that period I had discussions deep into the night in local FDJ branches, at activists’ conferences or simply during encounters with young people. But I do remember that these were always very interesting and enlightening discussions. Pacifist views were still widely held. This was an understandable reaction after the Second World War with its enormous devastations and losses and the crimes committed by the Nazi army. Twice within a generation the ruling powers had abused the confidence of the people. We explained to the youth patiently that all guns were not the same, that what is most important is who possesses them and to what purpose and for what kind of policy they are used. We explained the Marxist-Leninist view of wars and armies, the attitude of the working class to the military issue, the nature of just and unjust wars. We pointed out that the German people and the German working class too had their progressive military traditions.

This prepared the ground for Wilhelm Pieck to declare on 1 May 1952 that it would be necessary to organise the military defence of our homeland if the FRG and the three Western powers signed the so-called general treaty in its then existing form. At the end of May the 4th parliament of the FDJ decided to strengthen the ties between the youth federation and the German People's Police. Broad-based agitation and propaganda would have to be organised in order to explain the role and importance of the German People's Police for the armed defence of our republic. It was important to bring home to all young working men, the FDJ parliament declared, that service in the armed forces was an honourable mission for young citizens of our republic. Therefore the best FDJ members should be sent to join their ranks. In the report of the Central Council I supported the delegates' proposal to form military sports interest groups. From them emerged in August 1952 the Society for Sport and Technology.

After the failure of its aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, imperialism turned its efforts towards pushing back socialism from Europe. The cold war intensified. Systematically and more and more openly our adversaries worked towards the "D-Day", the time for a counter-revolutionary coup in the GDR. In the FRG a "Research Council for Questions Concerning the Re-unification of Germany" submitted detailed plans as to how the GDR should be annexed and capitalist conditions restored. Making use of Berlin-West and the open borders they sought to create a situation in the GDR which would enable them to start a counter-revolutionary coup. Agents' organisations and underground groups grew very active. From Berlin-West and FRG radio stations unbridled agitation against the GDR was disseminated. Masses of propaganda material with calls for subversive action were infiltrated into the country. Cases of sabotage were on the increase.

The enemies of the GDR counted on the difficulties we had to overcome in building the foundations of socialism. As a result of the heritage of the war and the imperialist splitting-up of Germany and the complicated demands which the creation of the new society and its defence put upon us, the economic situation was very tense. Capitalist forces in the GDR still hoped for a restoration of the old power and ownership conditions. Time was required to win the whole population for socialism and to give everybody an assured future. In order to achieve a faster pace of economic growth and to increase the rate of accumulation, the party and government took a number of decisions on long-term solutions. These involved price and tax

policy measures which for the time being made living conditions for the working people worse. Above all the rising work performance quotas which had been ordered proved to be a mistake. There was dissatisfaction among the workers, and their confidence in the party and the government suffered.

At the beginning of June 1953 the SED's ZK and the Council of Ministers of the GDR took measures intended to correct the mistaken decisions, to stabilise the economy and to improve the living conditions of the working population. But before they could take effect the adversary struck. On 17 June 1953 there were strikes and demonstrations in Berlin and some other cities in the GDR. The enemies of socialism made use of the discontent among working people to start a counter-revolutionary coup which had long been prepared and directed by imperialist secret services and agents' networks. But the intended general strike did not happen. When the workers saw that the counter-revolutionary agitators acted like fascists they quickly turned away from them. In many factories they decidedly turned against them. The armed services of the GDR stepped in side by side with units of the Soviet forces stationed in the GDR. This was decisive for the quick collapse of the attempted coup. A potential source of crisis, a trigger of military conflict in the heart of Europe, was eliminated.

In those days the most progressive among the workers and other working people closed their ranks around the SED. A workers' militia was set up. Like all leading activists I went to the working people. On 24 June 1953 I spoke to the workers at the VEB Lokomotivbau "Karl Marx" at Potsdam-Babelsberg about the causes and intentions of the counter-revolutionary coup attempt. I explained the conclusions we had drawn in order to solve the existing problems and to improve the living conditions of the people. During the two preceding days I had talked to workers in all departments of the factory. Thus I got to know their thoughts, ideas and desires and could explore the causes of their discontent.

We considered it most important to start from a thorough analysis of the situation and the power realities to guarantee a close and trusting relationship between the party and the working class and to be prepared at any time to take the necessary steps for the armed defence of socialist development. In discussions at the ZK and the Politbureau about the events of 17 June and the consequences for our work, the main topic was how to develop democracy within the party, to maintain collective leadership and to fortify the unity and cohesion of our party.

During the following year the building of socialism in the GDR made good

progress. As a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) since 1950 the GDR developed stable and advantageous foreign trade relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states. It thus achieved a steady economic ascendancy. Industrial production just about doubled between 1950 and 1955 and tripled from 1950 to 1960. The results of hard work showed up in the improvement of working and living conditions for the working people, in better education facilities and improved health services. Frida Hockauf, a weaver from one of our nationally owned factories, coined the phrase "Just as we work today, so our life will be tomorrow." This expressed in a manner comprehensible to everyone the basic context of economic life, an economic principle which guides us to this day.

During the fifties in the country the farmers joined together in agricultural cooperatives (LPG). Craftsmen, tradesmen and private entrepreneurs were also shown their prospects in socialist society. The joining together of craftsmen in production cooperatives played an important part in this. There are still many individual craftsmen in the GDR, whose contribution to the welfare of the population is helped by the state.

A way was found to include private entrepreneurs in the socialist development: in 1950 23.5 per cent of the GDR's industrial production still came from small and medium private enterprises. We decided then to offer the owners of such private enterprises a financial participation by the socialist state so that they could increase their contribution to the development of the economy. Today it can be said that they have not fared badly as a result. Many enterprises with government participation were created. In 1960 they still contributed 6.5 per cent of our country's industrial production. These companies were managed by their former private owners and existed till 1972. Their owners were then given the opportunity to acquire such knowledge as was required for the management of socialist production. In this, and above all in their increasing identification with our socialist aims, is the reason to be found why in 1972 they sold their shares to the state. For the most part the former private entrepreneurs became directors of nationally owned factories and many of them—except for those who have reached retirement age—are still there.

The first decade of the GDR was the time for laying the foundations of socialism. By the beginning of the sixties the tasks posed by the transition from capitalism to socialism were essentially accomplished. Socialist conditions of production could now be developed and the material-technological basis for socialism created.



As leading candidate for the People's Chamber
in conversation with pitmen of the Ernst Thälmann
potash works in Merkers, October 1958.

XV

Time for study

In the mid-fifties a new stage in my political life began. At the end of May 1955 the fifth parliament of the FDJ relieved me of my responsibilities as chairman of its Central Council. Of course, I was to maintain close links with the young people of our country, but I was leaving a job which had grown dear to me.

I was glad that my party was now giving me yet another opportunity to broaden my knowledge systematically. During the last days of August 1955, together with other comrades from the party and state apparatus and from the youth federation, I travelled to Moscow by train to take up a one-year study course at the party college attached to the Central Committee of the CPSU.

So, for the second time I was taking a protracted study trip to the land of Lenin. How much the face of the world had changed since my studies at the Lenin School in 1930/31! This time I was coming from a country in which socialism was being built.

The trip to Moscow passed in happy anticipation. Thoughtful discussions were intermingled with songs and card games. For us study meant still more thorough comprehension of the laws of social development and the generalised experiences of socialist construction. We were deeply interested in how the world socialist system and the united efforts by the countries of the

socialist community were influencing international events, and in what new possibilities there were for its future advancement. We dealt with the motivating forces and advantages of socialism not just theoretically but with a view to their practical application and our future tasks. We studied again the fundamental works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V. I. Lenin. Even though we all were not unfamiliar with scientific communism we discovered stimulating thoughts in our classics which needed to be thought through anew and which gave us valuable pointers for our political work. Under the guidance of Soviet lecturers, in close contact with comrades from other parties in the world communist movement, representing the most varied countries, we broadened our knowledge and insight. A lot of things were revealed in a clearer light. The course of study confirmed my conviction that one must not absorb Marxist-Leninist theory just as an abstract formula. For it is living science through and through, intended to be applied to real life. We Communists consider the interrelation between science and politics as one of fundamental importance for the victory of the new society and for the successful struggle of the working class for its goals. It had to be fully understood in order to eliminate subjectivist distortions and mistakes.

May I be permitted to repeat here a few thoughts which I wrote down in an article on "Questions of science and politics in the socialist society of the GDR" for the *World Marxist Review* in December 1971. "As is generally known, for the first time in history socialism makes it possible to fashion society in a conscious and planned manner, and precisely for this reason the political leadership of society by the party must be scientifically based. In grasping the laws and the decisive factors of development and taking carefully into consideration the interrelations between the various aspects of life, it is in a position to direct the creativeness of the working class and all working people into the right channels and to unfold it for the benefit of the people ... By its nature the leadership activity of the party has a political character and can therefore not be based exclusively on this or that special branch of science. Politics is the unity of the ideological-theoretical and the practical-organisational work of the party in leading social development under socialism. It demands the determination of the main targets in a given sector, the necessary analysis of all prerequisites and conditions, and finally the laying down of an exact programme as a guideline for action ... The more precisely politics reflects the interests of the working people and the more effectively it serves them, the better people understand it, the mightier mass initiative will be."

If society is to be shaped in a socialist manner then it is absolutely necessary to promote science and culture attentively and develop them steadily. This may be called one of the most lengthy and difficult projects. The socialist cultural revolution is not a specific requirement for backward countries which have to cope with a colonialist heritage of illiteracy. Rather the necessity exists everywhere of overturning the intellectual-cultural superstructure in the transition to socialism. While guarding and maintaining the whole progressive cultural heritage it is necessary to bring to full blossom national culture as determined by socialist ideals and to put science into the service of the people. Therefore it is the task of the working class to realise its leading role in culture and science as well. Marxism-Leninism becomes the dominant view of the world.

When we laid the foundation of socialism in the GDR we had also made good progress in culture and science. The gap one finds between art and the people in all capitalist countries was largely bridged, while the educational privileges of the propertied classes were overthrown. I will just mention the progress made in higher education. In 1951 the GDR had 22 universities and colleges: by 1960 we had 44. The number of students had trebled between 1951 and 1960 and was now 99,900.

Some scientists of the older generation thought at the time that rule by the working class and unobstructed access for the sons and daughters of the working population to the highest places of education would lower the level of scientific work. Experience has shown this to be entirely false. The growing number of working-class students studied very seriously and obtained good results. Gradually a new socialist intelligentsia emerged. It cooperated successfully with the representatives of the old intelligentsia and absorbed it.

I returned to Berlin in July 1956 enriched with new impressions and new insights, and resumed my work at the ZK and its Politbureau at a time when matters of principle with significance for the future were up for discussion. We could take it that the GDR had overcome the difficulties of its first few years. The targets of the first five-year plan had been achieved thanks to the great efforts of the working people. Socialist ownership had become the determining socio-economic foundation of the GDR. Progress in the improvement of living conditions for the working population made more and more citizens realise that we had chosen the right path. The cooperation of all parties and mass organisations in the National Front became closer and contributed more and more to the accomplishment of our social tasks.

But the outward conditions of our struggle had not become any easier. After the signing of the Paris Treaties in October 1954 the FRG had in 1955 become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) which had been founded in 1949. It not only accelerated its rearmament, but also sped up the reactionary development of its internal policy. The visible expression of this was the banning of the KPD, which the Federal Constitutional Court at Karlsruhe pronounced on 17 August 1956 after years of litigation.

If in the first half of the fifties we had tried together with patriotic forces in the FRG and through many direct proposals submitted to the federal president, the Bundestag and the federal government to find ways that might lead to a democratic reunification of Germany as a peace-loving and progressive state, the chances for such a policy were now fading more and more. It was the declared aim of Adenauer's government, with the support of NATO and as a junior partner of the USA, to use a "policy of strength" to reverse the results of the Second World War. It was not by chance that the federal chancellor demanded that there should no longer be talk about reunification but about "liberation of the Eastern zone". This political course meant a serious danger to peace in Europe.

The signing of the Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in May 1955 was a historically important act. It was an unmistakable answer to all plans to revise the results of the Second World War and to "erase" socialism from the map of the world. It also gave the GDR, one of the co-founders of this defence pact, more security. The conditions under which it pursued its international activities underwent substantial improvement. At the same time its obligations grew to make a greater contribution to the military protection of socialism side by side with the Soviet Union and the other member states of the Warsaw Treaty.

In autumn 1956 I resumed my activity at the SED's ZK. This took place during the politically tense situation which arose when international counter-revolution raised its head in Hungary. The news about the horrors committed by the reactionaries, the bestial murder of Hungarian comrades and class brothers filled me, who had experienced the cruelties of fascism at first hand, with bitterness and disgust. This made us welcome all the more the formation of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government under János Kádár. It gathered together all progressive forces, defended with the help of Soviet troops the socialist achievements in Hungary and led the Hungarian people back on the path of socialist development.

At the time we worked hard at strengthening the GDR. There were no few signs that indicated attempts to stir up waverers in our country, to cause unrest and to provoke armed incidents. When the class enemy tried in Berlin at the end of October 1956 to get a number of students from the Humboldt University to demonstrate in the streets, the mere appearance of units of the workers' militia was enough to nip this attempt in the bud. Even the London *Times* had to admit, in its own words, that the firmness of the GDR had virtually saved peace.

In this difficult time, in view of the massive enemy pressure and some uncertainty in the ranks of the world revolutionary movement even some members of our party leadership wavered. Even though our third party conference in March 1956 had clearly stated that socialist development in our republic was to be continued persistently as an inseparable part of the world socialist system some considered it opportune to sound the retreat in various political, economic and ideological fields.

At the 30th meeting of the ZK held from 30 January to 1 February 1957, I submitted the report of the Politbureau. Side by side with Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht, Friedrich Ebert, Gerhard Grüneberg, Kurt Hager, Bruno Leuschner, Hermann Matern, Erich Mückenberger, Alfred Neumann, Albert Norden, Heinrich Rau, Willi Stoph, Paul Verner, Herbert Warnke and many other ZK members I defended the political line of our party which was directed towards the victory of the socialist revolution. Certain that, at this time particularly, the Marxist-Leninist unity of our party was decisive for our socialist policy, I insisted that all existing problems had to be cleared up completely. It was in this spirit that the unavoidable settlement of accounts with some comrades who had grouped around Karl Schirdewan and Ernst Wollweber took place, resulting in their removal from their functions.

In situations which made high demands on our party and our state I frequently met working people and discussed political problems and tasks with them. I remember, for instance, visiting the builders of the Schwarze Pumpe industrial combine in April 1957. A small pub next to the premises which had been selected as the site for the biggest construction project in our second five-year plan lent its name to the industrial combine. A huge factory was growing up there in which coke, gas, energy, tar and other chemicals were made from lignite. Since the GDR has hardly any other sources of energy this industrial combine is of the greatest importance for the supply of raw materials and energy.

I repeatedly visited the working people in the district of Suhl at that time. In 1958 I became a parliamentary candidate for this district in the south of the GDR, whose mountains and woods make it scenically very attractive.

In February 1958 our ZK had made me a member of its Secretariat. A few months later the 5th Party Congress reelected me to the ZK. On 16 July 1958 I was elected a member of the Politbureau and a Secretary of the Central Committee. In this capacity I was primarily occupied with military and security policy, youth policy, trade union policy, the rights of women and the promotion of sports and physical education.

This was the last time our revered comrade Wilhelm Pieck took part in a party congress. Although bearing traces of old age and illness he insisted on taking part at least in the opening of the 5th Party Congress. Wilhelm Pieck died in September 1960. It was a sad loss for the country and for me personally. In an article for our activists' publication *Neuer Weg* I paid homage to this great workers' leader and trusted champion of the working people and pointed to the political legacy he had left us. With his unforgettable human qualities in mind I wrote: "His attitude to the party and his lifelong humility bear witness to the noble character of our comrade Wilhelm Pieck, to his utter devotion to the cause of the working class."



Taking the salute at a march past
of the Berlin workers' militia after the securing
of the GDR's state borders, 23 August 1961.

XVI

The thirteenth of August 1961

After returning from Moscow questions of military policy and national defence became the centre of my activity. In autumn 1956 I became secretary of the security commission of our party's ZK, which was headed by the First Secretary of the SED's ZK Walter Ulbricht. In 1960, when the GDR's National Defence Council was formed which Walter Ulbricht, as chairman of the Council of State, also headed, the GDR's Volkskammer made me secretary of the top government agency coordinating the country's defence. This activity provided frequent contacts with the then minister of national defence, Willi Stoph, now chairman of the GDR's Council of Ministers, and with his deputies Friedrich Dickel, now interior minister of the GDR, Heinz Hoffmann, now defence minister, and Heinz Kessler, now deputy defence minister and chief of the political administration of the GDR's National People's Army—also with Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. Grechko who commanded the group of Soviet armed forces in Germany from 1953 till the end of 1957. I often met him again in later years when he was supreme commander of the Joint Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty and then minister of defence of the USSR.

On 18 January 1956 the Volkskammer had passed the law on the creation of the National People's Army (NVA) and the Ministry of National Defence.

I supported the build-up of our National People's Army as strongly as possible. In my activity in the field of military policy I proceeded from the premise that the social conditions in the GDR both required and made it possible to build national armed forces and to make this a cause for the whole working class and the broadest sections of the working people. The objective unity between the working class, the people and the armed forces had to be used as an inexhaustible source of strength for the military protection of our republic. It was in line with the international nature of the working class and the emergence of the socialist community of states that we considered the military defence of socialism in the GDR as a collective internationalist task right from the outset. It could only be accomplished in closest cooperation with the USSR and its military might and with the other socialist brother states and their armies.

Besides the character of the state and its policy, which the armed forces serve, the top officer appointments are naturally decisive for the spirit and the aims of an army. In the SED's ZK and Politbureau as well as in the National Defence Council and the Council of Ministers of the GDR, we paid the closest attention to this issue. The preparation of fundamental cadre decisions and resolutions for the Politbureau and the National Defence Council were an important part of my work. About 70 per cent of the generals and admirals who served during the weeks and months of the build-up of the National People's Army had been active in the workers' movement before 1933. Many of them had proved themselves in the antifascist resistance. Almost one in three of them had been jailed or sent to a concentration camp during the Hitler dictatorship.

I considered working with the cadres one of my most important duties. I devoted much care and patience to it. In this context I often remembered the warmth and tactfulness—but also, where needed, strictness—which Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht and other comrades had devoted to my development. At the end of 1956, when we had essentially completed the process of setting up the units and formations of the armed forces, about 82 per cent of the officers and generals were, by their social background, industrial or agricultural workers; about 3 per cent farmers, 12 per cent white collar workers, and more than 3 per cent members of the intelligentsia and professions.

The National People's Army grew up as an army of antifascism and antimilitarism, an army of peace, an aim to which it has remained true. It represents a radical break with everything reactionary in German history.

It continues the traditions of the armies of the German peasants' war of 1524-26, the liberation wars of 1812/13, the November revolution of 1918/19, the workers' militia and the Red Ruhr Army which resisted the Kapp Putsch in 1920, the German International Brigades of 1936-39 in Spain and the German antifascists of 1933-45. Nowadays many schools, units, barracks, and vessels of the National People's Army are honoured with the names of revolutionary fighters.

Socialism needs officers with political experience and knowledge, and with a high measure of military knowledge and ability. They must be class-conscious, love their soldiers and care for every one of them. I strongly opposed views which cropped up here and there to the effect that in an army human relationships were not that important because there life was based on orders. It was not difficult to prove with practical examples that tasks were best performed and high levels of preparedness and efficiency achieved when commanders take a close interest in their soldiers. It is precisely because of the toughness of the service that officers are required to care for the needs, the well-being, the problems and requirements of their men.

It was the prime concern of the SED's branches within the armed forces to ensure this kind of leadership in the NVA. We knew from Lenin and from the experience of the CPSU that leadership by the Marxist-Leninist party is also a key issue in regard to the army. In November 1957 our Politbureau made the following statement about our military policy: "The strength of the army of the socialist state, equipped as it is with the most modern weapons and technical equipment, lies really in the persistent implementation of the resolutions of the party and the indissoluble relationship with the working people." A few months later, on 14 January 1958, the Politbureau, after intensive deliberations, passed the important resolution "On the role of the party in the National People's Army". This condensed the experience of two years in building up the armed forces. This document still remains, as far as matters of principle are concerned, the decisive guideline to this day.

The work schedule of the Politbureau and the ZK and the reports by the Politbureau to the meetings of the ZK dating from all those years prove that there was not a single important question concerning the strengthening of the armed forces and the national defence of the GDR, which was not collectively deliberated and jointly decided. So it has remained to this day, and nothing will change in this respect in the future.

I had made it a habit to investigate existing problems in military units,

detachments and formations. My colleagues often spent weeks with the troops. They spoke to the generals, officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men and with activists from the SED and FDJ branches. Up for discussion were the results of political and military training, the relationship between officers and men, between superiors and subordinates. We would also usually talk about relations between the troops and workers in the large socialist enterprises and the farmers in the production cooperatives, then still in their infancy, as well as about contacts with the Soviet comrades-in-arms. The conditions of life and service of the members of the armed forces always ranked high on the agenda.

I remember clearly a discussion with commanders and heads of the political administration of the military districts and service arms of the armed forces of the National People's Army in spring 1957. It too had been preceded by investigations so that we had a realistic picture of the actual conditions in the respective areas. The insights thus gained were the basis for our meeting at Eggersdorf on 12 and 13 June 1957 in which Walter Ulbricht, Willi Stoph, Hermann Matern and myself and other leading activists of the SED and the NVA took part and deliberated how the people's army could be strengthened as quickly as possible. Not infrequently we invited party secretaries and commanders to the meetings of the security commission of the ZK in order to get to know their opinion on impending decisions.

I paid special attention at that time to the border police which in the fifties had the task of becoming an efficient frontier defence force. Experience has long shown that border provocations and border conflicts can rapidly explode into a military confrontation of uncontrolled dimensions. Not a few provocations on our state border were only prevented from erupting into major conflicts by the level-headed conduct of our border guards. Such provocations evolved in the final analysis from a policy which stubbornly refused to recognise and respect the border of the GDR as the frontiers of an independent and sovereign state.

Twenty-one members of our border police and the later border troops were treacherously murdered from the territory of the FRG and Berlin-West in the execution of their duties. Nothing was more strongly indicated than to make sure that the equipment and training of our border guards enabled them to defend the GDR's frontiers against all violations and provocations. I therefore insisted that the conditions of life and service of our border soldiers be improved so that they could stand up to the rigours of their duties by day and night and in all weather conditions.

With the build-up of the national defence of the GDR the role of the workers' militia increased. Much has been written and said in the mass media of the Western world about them. Opinions have ranged from derogation to the excess of considering it an additional army. What was the reality? As I have said already, the militia had been created as a defence of the republic against counter-revolutionary assaults in 1953; they are the direct armed forces of the working class in the factories. Class-conscious workers have gathered together and master, beside their jobs in production or as members of a profession, the business of arms so as to be able to defend their gains.

The SED has led and guided the workers' militia from the local level to the level of the ZK. Beyond the immediate defence of their factories we requested them, while organising the country's defence at the end of the fifties, to protect the gains of the working class at the local and district level. We were always concerned to increase the efficiency of the militia force, to educate resolute, unyielding fighters, to improve the training of these groups of a hundred men each and to raise the standards of their commanders. It goes without saying that joining the workers' militia is voluntary.

Repeatedly I attended training sessions and exercises. I have known many commanding officers for more than two decades. Time and again I was impressed with the combat efficiency of the members of the militia and their confidence in the party. A few years later, at the 7th central course for commanders of militia groups at Schmerwitz on 20 April 1959 I was able to say: "The high degree of political maturity and morale, the firm discipline and the limitless devotion to the cause of socialism are the guarantee that the workers' militia in the GDR will continue to fulfil its duties honourably."

That our efforts for the military defence of the GDR had been vitally necessary, was soon to become evident. After a few flickers of hope in the second half of the fifties new war clouds loomed on the horizon in 1960/61.

The FRG's Bundeswehr had reached a strength of over 350,000 men. In the joint exercises of the Bundeswehr and NATO during 1959/60—Side Step, Hold Fast, Winter Shield, Wallenstein and whatever they were called—aggression against the GDR was rehearsed. In March 1961 the *Wehrpolitische Rundschau*, a journal published in the FRG, declared the West's possibilities of getting the East to yield by peaceful means had been ex-

hausted. There was only the possibility of changing the *status quo* by force or the “sacrifice of our own principles”: At a press conference in the USA the then defence minister of the FRG, Franz Josef Strauss, declared that one had to be prepared for some kind of civil war in Germany.

Early in June 1961 Bonn published a new plan for “D-Day” in the form of a report by the “Advisory Council on Questions Concerning the Reunification of Germany”. It filled a whole book and included precise instructions on how West German monopolies could take over, step by step, the GDR’s economy, how the SED should be eliminated and the trade unions robbed of their rights. The newspaper *Kölnische Rundschau* in its edition of 10 July 1961 appealed for the use of “all the means of cold war, war of nerves and shooting war... These must include not only conventional forces and armaments but also subversion, boosting internal resistance, work in the underground, destruction of the capacity to maintain law and order, the disruption of traffic and the economy, civil disobedience and riots...”. A few days later the then “minister for all-German questions” Ernst Lemmer with his staff rushed to Berlin-West in order to direct the psychological warfare against the GDR from there. NATO units in Europe were put on the alert.

The Western mass media started a campaign of slander and incitement against the GDR, creating an atmosphere conducive to aggression with reports of “floods of refugees” and “refugee squalor” that were ominously reminiscent of August 1939. Border violations and provocations were on the increase. In order to spread unrest among the population, saboteurs committed arson in Berlin’s slaughterhouse near the Leninallee station of the urban railway and at the Humboldt University in the city centre.

For 12 years the GDR’s border with Berlin-West—and more or less with the FRG too—had been open. More precisely, it had been an open border of the whole socialist community with the capitalist world. It now became more and more obvious what a danger this represented for peace. For the situation in and around Berlin-West could be exploited at any time to cause dangerous international tensions and conflicts.

Berlin-West, located in the middle of the GDR, has a 164-km border with our republic. About 28 miles of border separate Berlin-West from the capital of the GDR. Until August 1961 this border was neither secured nor could it be controlled at all. It ran through the middle of streets, through apartment blocks, allotments and waterways. Up to half a million people crossed it daily. Yet Berlin-West was not just another territory within the GDR but

according to its own leading politicians the “cheapest atom bomb,” ■ “thorn in the flesh of the East”, the “frontline city” of the cold war. No less than 80 espionage and terror organisations carried out their dark activities from there. Large-scale currency speculations were directed from there to destroy the GDR’s economy. Centres for the recruitment of skilled labour from the GDR had established themselves in Berlin-West. It could justifiably be called a transit centre for a regular trade in human beings, out of which unscrupulous managers made large sums of money per head. In mid-1961 aggressive circles in the FRG and their allies in some other NATO countries felt the time was ripe to stir up new unrest in the GDR. An operation by the Bundeswehr camouflaged as an “internal German police action” was to come to the “assistance” of the instigators.

We followed these menacing events with all due vigilance. Could we afford to look on passively while the open border was exploited to bleed our republic to death by means of an unprecedented economic war? Could we afford to remain inactive when a situation had arisen in the heart of Europe which with its hardly hidden mobilisations and intensified war hysteria on the Western side resembled that of the eve on the Second World War? Could we afford to twiddle our thumbs while Berlin-West was built up into a “bridgehead” of the cold war and exercised its “nuisance function” more and more uninhibitedly? Would the people of the GDR, could the peace-loving nations of Europe and the world have forgiven us if we had virtually encouraged the aggressors by our inaction? At the end of the Second World War we had vowed to do everything in our power to prevent another war ever being started from German soil. We were determined to honour this pledge under all circumstances. There was no lack of warnings from the other Warsaw Treaty countries in 1961. At the meeting of their Political Consultative Committee at the end of March 1961 which I attended, the dangers were strongly emphasised, but the resolve not to give in to the aggressive pressure of the imperialists was also voiced. The GDR had been no less emphatic in uncovering the danger to peace which had arisen in 1961. As late as 6 July 1961 the Volkskammer had submitted to the FRG government and the Senate of Berlin-West numerous proposals for reaching agreement in the form of ■ “German Peace Plan”. But it seemed that leading politicians in Bonn and Berlin-West were of the erroneous opinion that this willingness to come to an understanding sprang from weakness and that the GDR did not have effective means to counter the machinations of the cold warriors.

From 3 to 5 August 1961 a consultation was held between the first secretaries of central committees of the Communist and workers' parties from the Warsaw Treaty countries in which representatives from fraternal parties in various other socialist countries in Asia also took part. In agreement with the CPSU the SED proposed that the borders of the GDR with Berlin-West and the FRG should be controlled in the way customary between sovereign states. This proposal was unanimously approved by the Moscow meeting.

The then chairman of the GDR's National Defence Council Walter Ulbricht charged me with preparing and implementing the necessary operation. The requisite measures and draft orders for the National People's Army, the organs of the Ministries of State Security and of the Interior, for the mobile police and the People's Police, and for the workers' militia as well as the orders to be given to the central government institutions, the transport system, the construction industry and other economic instances were worked out. Later on we noted with satisfaction that nothing important had been left out of account.

To lead the operation I installed myself and my staff at the Berlin police headquarters. From there I was in constant contact with the commanding officers and staffs of the armed forces, the district committees of the SED in Berlin, Frankfurt/Oder and Potsdam, the central government departments, the Berlin Municipal Council and the regional councils of Frankfurt/Oder and Potsdam.

On 11 August 1961 the Volkskammer declared that a grave danger to the peace in Europe existed. It charged the GDR's Council of Ministers with preparing and implementing all measures which were necessary to safeguard peace. The following day the Council of Ministers passed the resolution that the still open border between socialist and capitalist Europe be placed under proper control.

When I drove to Lake Dölln in the afternoon of 12 August 1961 I saw on both sides of the road that the motorised infantry units of our People's Army were already in their assembly areas. At 4 p.m. the chairman of the National Defence Council Walter Ulbricht signed the orders, which we had prepared, for the security measures on the state border of the GDR with Berlin-West and the FRG to take effect. In the late evening, an hour before the operation started, the staff which I headed met at Berlin police headquarters. Present were the members of the Politbureau of the SED's ZK Willi Stoph, deputy chairman of the GDR's Council of Ministers, and Paul

Verner, the members of the ZK of the SED Heinz Hoffmann, minister of national defence, Erich Mielke, minister of state security, Karl Maron, minister of the interior, and Erwin Kramer, minister for transport, as well as Willi Scifert, deputy minister of the interior, Fritz Eikemeier, president of the People's Police in Berlin, and Horst Ende, chief of staff at the Ministry of the Interior. At 0.00 hours the alert was given and the action got under way. Thus the operation began which during the dawning day, a Sunday, made the world prick up its ears.

In accordance with the orders given the units of the National People's Army and the People's Police moved into the areas assigned to them. The workers' militia in Berlin and in the districts of Potsdam and Frankfurt/Oder which border Berlin-West, also took up their appointed positions. Our armed forces had support from the Soviet forces stationed in the GDR, commanded since 10 August 1961 by Marshal of the Soviet Union I. S. Konev.

Heinz Hoffmann, since July 1960 minister of national defence of the GDR, has said looking back at these tense days and hours: "I still remember how we moved the staffs and units of the People's Army up, camouflaged by certain troop movements. Erich Honecker phoned me during the night, gave me the 'H-hour' and said: "You know what's to be done. Move!" We had hardly reached the border when Erich Honecker arrived as well to see for himself whether our tanks and other units were in their right positions. He spoke not only to me and other high-ranking officers but, as is his habit, also to the other ranks on the spot and explained to them why we had to take these measures."

Within a few hours our state border all around Berlin-West had been secured. I had suggested the deployment of the political and military fighting force of the working class directly on the border, in other words, working people from socialist factories wearing the uniforms of the workers' militia. Together with members of the People's Police they were to safeguard the immediate border with Berlin-West. If necessary troops of the National People's Army and organs of the Ministry of State Security were to give them second-echelon support. Only in the event of NATO armies getting involved would the Soviet forces stationed in the GDR go into action.

The course of events showed that the GDR's armed forces stood their test extremely well. Nevertheless, this was not a purely military operation. The security measures required considerable political, ideological, economic and organisational activity. Without being able to talk in public about concrete

tasks we had mobilised the SED's whole party organisation in Berlin, which was then led by Paul Verner. Within hours the whole Berlin transport system had to be changed and the urban railway and underground to and from Berlin-West stopped. This could only succeed if the working people of the Reichsbahn and the Berlin transport authority carried out all instructions in a disciplined manner with full confidence in their workers' party and workers' government—and this they did. Even though thousands of working people had been called up for the defence of our state border or mobilised to explain to people what was going on, the 14 August 1961 in Berlin had to be a Monday of full production. The city wanted to be supplied as usual. Life was to go on as normally as possible.

I can imagine that in the staffs of NATO and the Bundeswehr it was understood very well what power of unified action stood behind measures such as those of 13 August 1961. Only with the assistance of innumerable voluntary helpers and supported by the understanding of the overwhelming majority of the working people could such an operation be carried out. It was therefore not only our military strength which was expressed during those days in August but also the strength of our socialist order, the superiority of our political system. However much one may try to twist things around in retrospect, the irrefutable fact remains that despite the very comprehensive preparations which were necessary to make it a success the erection of the antifascist defence wall came as a complete surprise to our enemies. And this even though foreign secret services had been able to carry out espionage and reconnaissance virtually unhindered across the open border. They did not succeed anywhere in organising serious resistance to our action.

I have repeatedly been asked whether we had consciously taken the risk of a major war at the time. We had good reason to assume that it would not be possible for NATO to respond with military aggression to such an action which after all took place on our territory. According to our information the USA, the main power in NATO without which military action would not have been possible, had its own clearly defined interests with regard to Berlin-West. These were: Unchanged status for Berlin-West; presence of the three Western powers in Berlin-West; and safe traffic between Berlin-West and the FRG. None of these interests were violated by our border defence measures. The Western powers were able to see in the communiqué of the consultative meeting of the first secretaries of our central committees that the Warsaw Treaty states respected the status of Berlin-

West as a special political territory. We had therefore given no reason for a military intervention by NATO. We were perfectly entitled to do what we did like any other independent sovereign state. We only placed our border under control in accordance with international law as laid down by the United Nations. Thus peace was saved and the foundation laid for the further thriving of the GDR.

During the days and weeks after the 13th of August 1961 I often spent time with the members of the workers' militia, the People's Police and the soldiers on our state borders. I explained to them the necessity and importance of our security measures and thanked them on behalf of the ZK and the government. I also took care that the population of Berlin and the districts of Frankfurt/Oder and Potsdam, particularly the workers, women and young people, kept close contact with the members of the workers' militia, of the People's Police and the NVA who were stationed at the border.

Many people may only have understood the full significance of the 13th of August 1961 in the following years. The attempts to eliminate the workers' and peasants' power in the GDR by means of a "limited action" had been nipped in the bud. Only a shambles was left of Adenauer's "policy of strength". Not by accident was the 13th of August 1961 called the end of the Adenauer era in the FRG. Even politicians who are not exactly our friends have declared years ago that by our action a valuable service had been done for peace on German soil and in Europe.

No doubt, the 13th of August 1961 made leading circles in the West realise what they had rejected for more than a decade. The sovereign socialist German state could neither be blackmailed nor overrun. Thus the 13th of August 1961 contributed to the preconditions for the later departure from the cold war, the change from confrontation to negotiations, and the first steps towards détente. As I see it, this road led to the Helsinki agreement, in particular to the recognition of the existing borders in Europe and of their inviolability.

The border between the GDR and the FRG and Berlin-West is at the same time the borderline between two opposing world systems and military pacts. It must never again become a "hot border". It therefore fills me with satisfaction time and again when experts and realistic politicians in the Western world share our opinion as to what a wholesome effect for peace and détente emanated from the measures taken on the 13th of August 1961.



Down the pits in the Werra potash district, 16 January 1976.

XVII

Trust in the strength of the people

It is one of the inalienable principles of members of a Marxist-Leninist party and, of course, even more so one of the precepts of its leading politicians to maintain a close relationship with the working population. Encounters with them, above all at the places where they work and live, have always been one of my personal desires and an important aspect of my work which no reports or conferences can replace. This is completely in line with the traditions of the revolutionary workers' movement and with the actions of such outstanding leaders as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, August Bebel, Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck.

We agree with Lenin who said in 1917: "The bourgeoisie only considers a state to be strong when it is able by using the whole power of the government apparatus to direct the masses to where the bourgeois rulers want them. Our idea of strength is a different one. In our view it is the consciousness of the masses that makes the state strong. It is strong when the masses know everything, can judge everything and do everything consciously." This is the maxim we follow.

For us Communists complete solidarity with the people is the most normal and obvious way of mastering our tasks. It follows logically from the fact that we "do not pursue interests other than those of the whole proletariat".

We pursue communism as our aim in the interest of the whole population. We know from experience that this aim can only be achieved together with the working people. Therefore our encounters with the people are no mere ritual. They are also free from demagoguery towards the voters.

As politicians of a socialist state we are flesh of the people's flesh and blood of their blood. We have no need to be secretive or to manipulate the masses. Our policy is clearly visible to everybody, and our confidence in the masses is unshakable. From it flow our responsibility and our duty to answer to the party, the working class and the people. For instance, the reports by the Politbureau, the speeches, discussions and resolutions of all party congresses and all meetings of the ZK are published in the newspapers of our party. Every citizen ought to be in a position to form an immediate picture of our policy, and to contribute their thoughts and actions to it. We have adhered to this practice for decades.

In those functions which the SED entrusted to me—in the socialist youth federation as well as in its collective leadership—I have used every opportunity to inform myself through personal contact about the life of the working people and about what motivates them, about the concrete situation in the country—at “first-hand”, one might say.

This is still my attitude today in my capacity as general secretary of the SED's Central Committee and chairman of the Council of State of the GDR in my encounters with workers, with citizens in towns and villages, with members of the National People's Army and the other armed services.

These talks are a special bonus for me. Personal contact provides the clearest indicator as to how the party's policy is understood and whether the working people identify with it. I have always gained valuable insights from such encounters for new ideas and decisions. Every encounter, every talk with working people at their place of work, in their homes, in the streets or in military units is of lasting value for me. Visits to industrial and agricultural enterprises, schools and colleges in the GDR as well as many encounters abroad have been—besides the study of Marx, Engels and Lenin—the most important occasions for learning in my activity as a party leader. They provide no less inspiration for carrying out the business of state than the study of scientific treatises or the reading of experts' reports on development problems in our country.

The encounters with the population, members of our party and other parties and citizens with no party affiliations enrich my own work and, I

may add, the work of the ZK, its Politbureau and Secretariat. It gives their style of work a special stamp.

Such a direct exchange of thoughts and experiences helps us to assess realistically what has been achieved, to judge objectively and soberly what the chances for further progress are and thus to decide the next steps in the sure knowledge that they will be achieved by the strength and initiative of the people. In our view this is the decisive requirement for all success.

My visits are above all directed to those working in the crucial sectors of the manufacturing and construction industries, agriculture, science and culture and whose contributions are of great importance for our economic and social development. In the course of thousands of such encounters I have been able both to take and to dispense advice.

During the sixties and seventies I often visited the potash miners in the Suhl district. This district in the southwest of the GDR comprises the largest part of the Thuringian Forest and parts of the Rhön, that mountain range which I had crossed in difficult circumstances on my trip from Berlin to Frankfurt-am-Main at the end of 1945. In the past this used to be a poor area. The inhabitants worked in armament, machine and tool-making factories and the automotive industry. Many others were employed in the woodwork, glass and toy industries, in mining and agriculture, eking out a miserable existence.

Nowadays the Suhl district is of considerable economic significance; it supplies important needs for the economy and population of the GDR as well as for exports. The district is particularly well known for its machine and automotive industry, the manufacture of electrical household appliances, and ancillary products for the electrical, electronics and engineering industries, its hunting guns, glass and ceramics industry as well as woodwork and miscellaneous other goods. Its extensive forests, its mountains and its valleys make it a beautiful recreation area. Hundreds of thousands of people from the GDR and other countries spend their holidays there every year.

The potash mining in the district is of particular importance to our country. The GDR is the third largest producer of potash in the world and a leading exporter. We therefore call potash our "white gold". The Suhl district mines supply a large part of our total potash production and export to more than 40 countries.

I remember many encounters with workers from the Werra potash mine, a large installation called after the river Werra which runs through the Suhl

district. As a party activist and member of parliament I have had close friendly relations with the miners for more than 20 years. In meetings at the mine face within the mine system which extended over many square kilometres I was time and again very much impressed with the great performance of the miners. Work is going on, often under really difficult geological conditions, at a depth of 900 metres and at temperatures of 40°C.

In my youth I had experienced the hard living conditions of the Saar miners and their families. Not least for this reason I believe I can judge the work and life of the miners. I am all the more satisfied at having seen during my visits how much the miners' lot has been improved in our country.

At a rally before the 1963 Volkskammer elections the face work foreman Theo Schäfer said: "On behalf of my brigade I hereby propose to all the assembled workers that you be nominated again as our member of the Volkskammer. We cannot make a better proposal because all potash miners have great confidence in you. This confidence is mutual. We have carefully followed what you have said, whether at delegates' conferences of our works party organisation, at meetings of the men or at ZK sessions, and we found that you always think highly of us. We are greatly honoured by this recognition. We have great respect for the services you have rendered since your early youth to the well-being of the working class. For us you are the brave fellow-fighter of Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht. Therefore we propose you as our candidate for the Volkskammer because your upright attitude throughout your life of struggle is for us the best guarantee that the targets mentioned in the National Front's election manifesto will be accomplished in the people's highest representative body."

When I asked why they were steadily improving their work performance the miners answered that in our state work was in everybody's interest. This realisation was for them the special incentive to make full use of the potentialities of socialism for the benefit of the people and every individual. Such answers confirm that the essence of our policy is correctly understood.

The working people in our country feel that visits from leading politicians are not just polite gestures or marginal events in an election campaign. They are working visits during which all problems can be openly discussed. No "difficult" questions are excluded. On the contrary, overcoming difficulties and finding solutions are particularly important points in most of our discussions. Of course I am happy when for instance the potash miners

consider me one of their own, when they say: "With you one can really talk honestly about everything, including our worries and problems. You don't just listen, you also help."

I consider such statements not merely as personal acclaim but as a confirmation that the well-being of the people is at the centre of all reflections and actions in our country. How could I consider myself as anything else but a worker amongst workers? Because I was a worker and, in my heart of hearts, I have remained one.

A worker—I do not remember exactly in which factory—once told me: "Dear comrade Erich, when you visit us you insist that we put the problems on the table which our factory has to solve. That is not at all easy for us but we enjoy having such talks because they are somehow a mental preparation for our work during the coming months. I know that my colleagues think the same way."

How necessary and fruitful such informal talks are! Therefore I insist that all government officials and plant managers maintain steady and close contact with the other working people.

I had many personal encounters with workers, engineers and scientists in the mechanical engineering sector in the industrial districts of Karl Marx Stadt, Magdeburg and Leipzig. Mechanical engineering forms an important part of our economy. It employs nearly 30 per cent of all those engaged in industry. At meetings with working people in such important works as the Ernst Thälmann heavy engineering plant at Magdeburg and the Fritz Heckert works at Karl Marx Stadt we discussed above all how scientific-technological progress could be accelerated and how new, more efficient and more aesthetically designed machines could be developed and produced.

My present constituency, Karl Marx Stadt, previously Chemnitz, had in the past been the town of grim, arduous toil, of poverty and squalor for the exploited. But it had also been the town of the fighting, rising revolutionary workers' movement. If we talk of Karl Marx Stadt today we think of a modern town centre and newly created residential areas. One thinks of electronic data processing equipment, accounting machines, machine tools and textile machines as well as teleprinters and automatic control devices, including numerical ones, for the machine tool industry. This town and its factories have become an exporter of manufactured products for the world market. The working people with their initiative and industry have made the name Karl Marx Stadt one which is appreciated and respected even beyond the borders of our country.

Here—as in Suhl—I have frequently met voters, had discussions with them and delivered reports to them. However I do not only visit factories which have the most modern machines and equipment and where working conditions are very good. I am thinking for instance of the Rudolf Harlass foundry at Karl Marx Stadt whose workers are real friends of mine. As recently as 1970 this factory had some rather outdated workshops. Heat, dust, noise and fumes gave the workers a hard time. Much was asked of them. It deserves all the more recognition that they should tackle selflessly their great tasks and achieve the plan targets. During a lively discussion in one of the workshops I realised of course how urgent it was to improve working conditions. We discussed together how the hard work could be made easier. After our discussion the Council of Ministers decided on comprehensive measures in order to modernise the factory quickly. Today it works with new technology, the working conditions having been vastly improved.

If I have written here about my visits to factories this does not mean that I consider it the only form of communication between a party and state leader and our citizens. Apart from this the larger tasks that the party has entrusted me with involve many necessary and urgent commitments which unfortunately limit the time available for such talks.

I have a close comradesly relationship with the trade unions, their members and activists. For nearly 35 years now the FDGB has been the biggest class organisation of the workers and other working people in our country. The trade unions represent an enormous force, having 8.7 million members. This is the overwhelming majority of blue and white collar workers and members of the intelligentsia.

Trade unions in the capitalist countries are often considered a force opposed to the ruling system there. I would not like to contradict this. However, under socialist conditions, in our society which does not permit exploitation of man by man, the trade unions help in creating and strengthening the new society. They are a fundamental force of the state.

In this respect my path through life resembles that of almost all German Communists. Joining the trade unions was the beginning of my political career. This happened to me in the twenties when I became a tiler's apprentice and joined the woodworkers' union. By now I have been a trade unionist for more than half a century. When the construction and woodworkers' union celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1969 my name, together with those of other associates like Albert Norden, Willi Stoph and Walter

Ulbricht, was entered into the book of honour. On the occasion of my 50 years' membership I was presented with a diploma and a tiler's hammer, the symbol of the tiler's trade.

My experiences confirm that trade unions which are freed from the influence of entrepreneurs are a great and absolutely necessary school of class struggle and development of class-consciousness for the workers and many other working people. Internationally renowned workers' leaders like Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck have taught me that a comradely relationship between party and trade unions is a key issue in the battle for the interests of the workers. I have never forgotten this.

We Communists considered the destruction of the free trade unions by the Nazi dictatorship in 1933 a severe blow against the working class. We therefore urged that the right conclusions be drawn from the bitter historical experience immediately after the liberation from fascism in 1945, against a great deal of resistance. It was of paramount importance to realise that the strength of the working class lay in its unity. Thus as early as 15 June 1945 the appeal of the trade unions' preparatory committee for Greater Berlin to form new free trade unions marked the birth of the FDGB. This was, as I well remember, a great event. With the unity of the trade unions an important basis for the political unity of the working class had been created. I am proud to have been a contributor to the development of a genuine fighting community between our party and the trade unions from that day onwards.

In my functions in the party and the state I have always been for the trade unions being able to represent and safeguard the interests of blue and white collar workers in every possible way. As we have already seen, this was of course not just a matter of desk work. I consider encounters with trade unionists and shop floor representatives in factories among the most valuable opportunities to get to know what is going on. Every day they have to represent a multitude of trade union interests. They consider it their task to further the progress of the competition and innovation movement. They deal with work and wages issues, work safety and social insurance, the allocation of homes, holiday places in facilities owned by the FDGB or the enterprises, canteen food, the organisation of holiday camps for the children of employees, questions of further education and culture. In our talks they don't hold back anything. They are responsible people who have the flourishing of socialism at heart and who have to solve many everyday problems. I encourage them to muster up that portion of obstinacy without which trade

union representation of interests is not possible. They must never give in when there are difficulties to be overcome.

I should not like ever to go without seeing and hearing on the spot how trade unions work for the well-being of working people, how they help to achieve the increased economic performance which we need, or how socialist competition contributes to increased efficiency and quality in production so that the material and cultural standard of living of the people can be raised.

Not infrequently I am asked what the causes for the stability of our state are. I think the answer is simple even if it may not be acceptable to some people who are ill-inclined towards us. The secret of the stability of our socialist society consists above all in the fact that our party is inextricably linked to the workers and other working people. It belongs to the class and the people itself, lives, works and fights together with them. Every citizen feels that the policy of our party and state serves the people, their lives in peace and prosperity, in safety and security. Confidence in the masses, a confidence which they answer with deeds—that is the source of our stability.



After decorating successful GDR participants
in the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid 1980, 21 April 1980.

XVIII

Close connections with sport

I still remember well the reception we held in February 1968 for the first independent Olympic team of the GDR. We felt joy and satisfaction that we had at last succeeded in achieving the participation with equal rights of our athletes as representatives of our socialist fatherland in the Olympic Games, world championships and other international competitions. Countless obstacles had been mounted against it in international sports bodies and sports federations by NATO states, particularly the FRG, acting in the spirit of the cold war. In vain.

Now that the GDR has been in existence for over thirty years the successes of our athletes are known the world over. In all continents their performance is spoken of with respect. Hardly a month passes in which I do not have reason to express thanks and appreciation to our country's athletes. In my capacity as first secretary or general secretary of the SED's Central Committee I have been able to send about 660 messages of congratulation to Olympic, world and European champions, to winners of world or European cups.

But I am thinking not only of those who stand on the winners' platform. We also respect and appreciate those who, despite intensive training and great efforts, have not been able to bring any medals home. We also feel

for those who for reason of injury or other circumstances could not participate and thus were deprived of their reward for months and years of effort.

My relationship to sport is not, however, limited to joy at the successes of our athletes and the sending of messages of congratulation. As I have already mentioned, I had my first encounter with sport in my early years. In the Young Communist League at Wiebelskirchen it went without saying that one was a member of the Fichte workers' gymnastics and sports club. We did gymnastics, and among friends we discussed the political issues of the day. We did the same in the tourists' club at the Friends of Nature when we wandered through our beautiful homeland. The German workers' sports movement was always closely linked with the struggle of the proletariat. It helped many young people to find their way into our revolutionary movement.

However, I learned not only gymnastics but something much more important: appreciating the value of physical activity for one's own health. I never managed to beat any records or win medals, nor was that the important thing for me. But I can still do some of the exercises we did then.

At Brandenburg-Görden they also held an Olympic competitor: the European wrestling champion Werner Seelenbinder. He was not only a sportsman but also a Communist. During the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin he had helped to spread the policy of our party which sought to expose Hitlerism. In the Olympic village he distributed leaflets among foreign athletes and also passed them on, via courier, to resistance groups outside the Olympic village. He was later an activist with the KPD's Berlin organisation. He fell into the hands of the Gestapo at the beginning of February 1942 and was executed at Brandenburg-Görden on 24 October 1944, half a year before our liberation, almost to the day.

During the early days after liberation from Nazism in the midst of rubble and squalor there were more urgent problems to be seen to first. But as I have mentioned, even during this difficult time I spoke up for giving the young people possibilities to practise sports and games. In the fundamental rights for the young generation we therefore also suggested measures to promote hiking and sport for the young: "The cultural efforts of the young people should be given full support by making available facilities, installations and equipment such as youth hostels, sports establishments, boat houses etc."

Marshal of the Soviet Union V. I. Chuikov reported later on our requests: "I remember with what energy and persistence Erich Honecker, under the difficult conditions of Germany's reconstruction, advocated the allocation of premises for sports establishments where young boys and girls would not only have physical exercise but would also be educated in ■ new socialist spirit." But this was not all that was needed. Sports equipment and sports clothing were urgently required. So the youth federation saw to that. How arduous, how exhausting it was to solve all these problems, how much optimism was needed to revive sport! But we had confidence in our own strength. We enjoyed every bit of success in overcoming these seemingly invincible difficulties. Slowly but persistently we advanced.

Overcoming material difficulties was only one problem. We wanted to create ■ new democratic sports movement committed to peace and friendship among nations. That was not at all easy. The Allied Control Council had dissolved all Nazi sports organisations and did not permit any successor organisations. Our first answer was to create FDJ sports communities. But this was of course no lasting solution because in this way only a few could participate in sports activities and take part in competitions, and that only within a very limited framework.

Remembering my experience in the workers' sports movement I repeatedly raised the question in the SED's party leadership, in talks with those responsible for youth issues in the trade unions, and with sports activists in the youth federation, as to how we could help sports activities more effectively. Finally we found a way. On 1 August 1948 the Central Council of the FDJ and the National Executive of the FDGB jointly appealed to all working people interested in sports to create a unified democratic sports movement. On 1 October 1948 came the decisive move. The German Sports Committee constituted itself at Berlin's Haus der Jugend. Its purpose was to develop sports in such a way as to "promote physical health and increased work performance and thus create joy, happiness and relaxation".

In my capacity as FDJ chairman I took part in the formation process. Around the table were activists from our youth organisation and the trade unions, experienced men from the workers' sports movement, and also representatives of former bourgeois sports associations. We had got together in order to create a sports movement in which the conclusions from the perpetual abuse of sports for the interests and aims of German militarism and fascism were drawn. Despite many differing views we were agreed in principle. Sport was to serve peace, democracy and social progress ex-

clusively. This day opened up ■ new chapter in German sports history which contributed to the rise of our country.

The new, democratic sports movement soon gained respect. In winter 1948/49 it held the first winter sports championships at Oberhof, in the past ■ spa for the nobility and the financial and big business aristocracy. A little later our athletes were invited to the second World Festival of Youth and Students in Budapest in 1949, and we sent our best team to the Danube. But there was disappointment waiting for us at first. As our sports associations were not yet internationally recognised, student leaders from western countries protested against our people's taking part. The competitions started without us. But our Hungarian friends found a way out. They declared a match between our footballers and the Hungarian eleven as a match between trade union teams. As our trade unions already belonged to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and at the same time were the officially responsible body for the sports movement, this was a genuine solution. In this way our athletes were able to gain their first international experience in Budapest.

In December 1949 the Soviet chess federation obtained approval from the international chess federation for our chess champion Edith Keller to take part in the world championship. The Soviet ambassador to the GDR conveyed the official invitation, and Edith Keller was able to travel to Moscow. She took fifth place. Consequently our chess federation was the first of our sports organisations to be recognised and adopted by an international federation. It was to take almost two decades before GDR athletes were able to exercise all the rights due to the independent sports movement of a sovereign state.

Physical education in schools gave us some headaches during the early years. Nearly 90 per cent of all sports teachers had been members of the Nazi party. They were out of the question for our new schools and had to be replaced by antifascist teachers. The first syllabus for physical education of 1 July 1946 had stated expressly that school games were "to help build personality ... and lead to the harmonious development of young people".

The first youth law of February 1950 included many measures for the promotion of sports, hiking and recreation. It decreed the creation of ■ sports badge, the increased production of sports goods and the allocation of 20.5 million marks for the construction of 19 halls, stadiums and other sites. The College for Physical Culture and Sports at Leipzig was given top priority and opened with 96 students on 12 October 1950. During that same

year the Ministry of Education had to train 700 physical education and swimming instructors. A little later the Ministry of Education issued a decree making instruction in physical culture and swimming obligatory in all schools. Since then the young sports movement and the educational authorities have worked closely together.

The third World Festival of Youth and Students and the 11th Academic Summer Games were held at the same time in summer 1951. They were the biggest international sports festival to have been organised in the GDR up till then. Its winners were recognised as world student champions. For the first time a team from the USSR with their world-class athletes had come to the GDR. In peaceful competition friendships grew which helped to establish close ties between athletes from the GDR and the USSR. I remember the moving moment at Berlin's Ostbahnhof railway station when amid the cheers of thousands of people and with our best wishes I said good-bye to this team.

At that time three quarters of a million citizens in the GDR already belonged to the sports movement. It was well on its way to becoming a genuine people's sports movement. This, however, required that our country be represented in the international sports organisations and in the Olympic movement.

On 22 April 1951 the National Olympic Committee of the GDR had been founded in Berlin. In its statutes it is emphasised that it considers it its purpose to educate youth in athletic competition in a spirit of international friendship and peace and to prepare the athletes of the GDR for participation in the Olympic Games in the spirit of the Olympic ideals of the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin.

This, however, proved to be the most difficult of problems. At first a majority in the International Olympic Committee thwarted the participation of GDR athletes with the excuse that only *one* German team could participate. In actual fact, this acknowledged the Bonn government's arrogant claim to be the sole representative of Germany. In the following years further efforts were made to prevent GDR athletes from taking part in international events. Above all certain circles wanted to prevent our athletes taking part with the flag and national anthem of the GDR, that is in the way in which athletes from all countries have participated in international contests for decades. Even with this kind of discrimination certain circles in NATO countries thought they could thwart the international recognition of the GDR. Under international pressure ■ compromise was adopted which

decreed that ■ two-state team of the GDR and the FRG with neutral emblems should participate in the Olympic Games from 1956 to 1964.

But even then we already had close sporting relations with many countries. In 1948 Poland and Czechoslovakia had initiated ■ stage-by-stage bicycle race for amateurs between Warsaw and Prague. In 1952 we were invited to participate as ■ third organising country. Thus the Peace Race was created which every year in May brings together the world's best amateurs and brings millions of people onto the streets.

More than once I was asked to hold ■ reception on behalf of the GDR for the participants in the race, and I enjoyed being with these athletes for whose self-discipline and fighting spirit I had great respect. In 1957 the reception took place in the house of culture of an engineering factory at Görlitz. The coach of the Belgian team, Silver Maes, who had twice won the Tour de France as a professional, expressed cordial gratitude for the excellent organisation and the hospitality which had been an outstanding feature of the race.

Gustav Adolf Schur from Magdeburg became our country's best-known athlete on account of his successes in the Peace Race, and his popularity remains high to this day. For many years he has been one of my colleagues in the Volkskammer, first in the FDJ, then in the SED parliamentary group.

As I have said I was given responsibility for the party's youth and sports policy within the Secretariat of the ZK at the end of the fifties. In this way my very close and personal ties with young people and sports were prolonged.

A new chapter in the history of the German sports movement began with the foundation of the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation (DTSB) in Berlin at the end of April 1957. With this the conditions for a comprehensive and unified organisation of gymnasts and athletes in the GDR had been created. The new organisation had already more than a million members.

On behalf of the ZK I took part in the constituent meeting and conveyed to the athletes the greetings and best wishes of our party. We were convinced that the GDR athletes had in the DTSB created an organisation for themselves which would enable them to participate even more effectively than before in the building of socialism in our country and in the further development of physical culture. In its founding charter it was laid down that the DTSB as the organisation of gymnasts and athletes in the GDR considers it its prime objective to win over the whole population, above all the young,

for physical culture and sports, to promote the all-round formation and education of healthy and happy people and thus to help with the construction of the socialist order of society. The task was to achieve still broader popular participation in sports and in the leadership of the sports organisation, and as I specially pointed out, to develop sports for children and youth with even greater vigour.

When in 1960 on the occasion of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the enactment of the youth law we drew up a balance-sheet, we were able to produce impressive facts. The GDR's athletes had 19,000 sports facilities at their disposal. At Leipzig a stadium for 100,000 spectators had been erected. In addition we had created ■ sports hall in Berlin, a swimming hall in Rostock and one of the most modern ski-jumps of the time at Klingenthal. More than 1.3 million citizens had qualified for the sports badge, more than 4.2 million had in some way participated in sports in 1959 alone. GDR athletes had established 24 world records and 28 European records. Gustav Adolf Schur had twice become world road cycling champion. The boxer Wolfgang Behrendt had won the first Olympic gold medal. Gisela Birkemeyer and Christa Stubnick had laid the foundation for our women's athletics.

Many ideas and initiatives had been put forward and implemented in order to win over still more people for sports. Our youth journal organised a "Rendezvous Olympia" — an event in which the most successful athletes of our country met the "men and women in the street" and measured each other's strength in a good-natured manner without, of course, aiming at any records. Soon thousands were attending these rendezvous with enthusiasm. I remember one such encounter on 3 June 1959 in which a Politbureau team with Walter Ulbricht, Alfred Neumann, Paul Verner, two youngsters and myself played volleyball. It was only one set, and we won 15 to 8.

Major gymnastics and sports festivals are by now a tradition of our sports movement and of our country. The idea is not to set any records but to enable hundreds of thousands of people to have a good time.

The balance-sheet I mentioned included ■ trip by a GDR team to the USA. At the Olympic Winter Games at Squaw Valley in 1960 North America saw for the first time GDR athletes taking part — though still as part of a two-state team. In parting we told them to consider themselves messengers of peace and understanding, representatives of the first German workers' and peasants' state. In this spirit, so we told them, they should contribute to the development of new ties in sports. They succeeded even though many

obstacles still had to be overcome. It will be recalled that the US authorities refused entry to coaches and all sports journalists from the GDR. As a result the secretary general of our skiing federation had to stand in as a radio commentator as well and he reported the Olympic victory of our ski-jumper Helmut Recknagel. More frequent meetings between representatives of the USA and the GDR helped to get such problems out of the way.

Two Olympiads later, at Mexico City in 1968, the GDR was for the first time represented by an independent team. This happened at a time when our athletes were beginning to gain international recognition by their successes.

Some people maintain that we unleashed a “chase for medals” and that we were thus pursuing aims which did not have much to do with sports. I should like to reply that sports and games are of interest to us Communists mainly because they help to convince people to lead a healthier life and live longer — not to mention the fact that going to a sports field often makes it unnecessary for you to go to the doctor. It enhances the better features in a person’s character which are as important to an all-round educated person as healthy physical development. Gymnastics and sports festivals, children’s and youth Spartakiads, spare-time and recreational sports: we organise all this to attract as many people as possible to engage in sporting activity.

It goes without saying that many talented youngsters are discovered in the process thanks to the wide scope of our sports movement. All we do is to encourage their natural striving for perfection and excellence. If they win top honours at world championships or the Olympic Games one day, they become examples for others, winning over new generations for sport.

All in all, competitive sport, mass sport and school sport have contributed to the esteem of our socialist state and gained us respect abroad. In future too we shall pay much attention to competitive sport as well as mass sport, we shall honour not only Olympic medallists but also the winners of children’s and youth’ Spartakiads, the coaches of top athletes and the physical education instructors in schools.

With all this we have succeeded in ensuring that sports and physical culture occupy a distinguished place in the life of the GDR. Sports activities have become an indispensable part of the lives of many citizens of our country. In this connection it may be mentioned that the Constitution of our republic provides that the full development of the socialist personality includes the promotion of citizens’ participation in physical culture and sports.

In the sixties I often met athletes who told me of many a bitter experience. The government of the FRG had asked their allies in NATO to refuse entry to GDR athletes as a matter of principle. Many of our best athletes were thus prevented from taking part in world championships. Sport was thus misused to exert political pressure in pursuance of an evil cause. Even the flag of the GDR was forbidden in the FRG and all NATO countries and was hauled down by police. At Mainz 50 policemen were sent against seven of our women athletes to force them to haul down the GDR flag which they had carried with them. But none of these machinations, of which I could cite dozens, could stop the rise of GDR sport.

In view of all this everybody will understand the special joy with which we welcomed the successful teams returning from the Olympic Games. At the Olympic Summer Games at Montreal in 1976 athletes from the socialist countries won more than half of the medals and points for the first time. After these games we invited the whole GDR team to the Palace of the Republic including, of course, those athletes who had not won medals, the coaches, the boat builders, the attendants and doctors—all of them with their spouses. I thanked them for their efforts and was able to announce that about 98,000 children and youngsters had taken part in the Spartakiads and thousands of citizens had participated in long hikes.

We had invited the Spartakiad winners for the reception of the Montreal Olympic team to the Palace of the Republic to document the close ties between championship and popular sports. Children's and youth Spartakiads have long since become a tradition. Every year in all districts of the GDR a Spartakiad is held—the opening ceremony is always a spirited event—and every other year the best young GDR athletes meet in our capital Berlin for the “final round” or in the city of Leipzig for its own no less traditional gymnastics and sports festivals. Winter sports Spartakiads are held at our winter sports centres.

We honour our best athletes for their excellent performances in many ways. They have enriched the life of our people and rendered great service to the international reputation of the GDR.

When the GDR celebrated its 30th anniversary the DTSB had more than three million members. This was enough reason to get together with athletes, coaches, training supervisors and sports officials to draw up a balance-sheet. It was one of the most emotional meetings with athletes I have ever attended. We remembered the difficult beginnings—which the younger ones knew only from hearsay. Impressions were revived of those years when Soviet coaches

had come to help us take our first steps in world arenas. Now we saw that the “apprentices” had become masters. Nowadays GDR coaches work in many countries. At our Leipzig College for Physical Culture and Sport coaches and students from many countries, primarily from Africa and Asia, acquire new knowledge of sports science.

Sometimes I am asked whether I attend sporting events and what my favourite sport is. This question is not so easy to answer as it may seem. In my very early years I did a lot of apparatus work and gymnastics in general and played handball. I still like apparatus gymnastics. But these days I hardly have time to do much more than my daily exercises. I enjoy hunting though.



At the opening of the Ernst Thälmann Pioneers' Palace in Berlin
on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the GDR, 3 October 1979.

XIX

New horizons for youth

A few days before the 30th anniversary of the GDR the children of the country were given a beautiful present: the Ernst Thälmann Pioneers' Palace at Berlin's Wuhlheide. I had been present in 1950 when the first president of our republic, Wilhelm Pieck, handed over to Berlin's children their own first big facility, the Ernst Thälmann Pioneers' Park. Two years later in July 1952 we were able to inaugurate, in the presence of our president, the Wilhelm Pieck Pioneers' Republic, named after him, at Lake Werbellin in the Schorfheide where since then children from all parts of the GDR spend eventful days with their young friends from other countries every year.

My joy at being present when the new palace was opened on its historic site is understandable. It was nice to see with what enthusiasm and competence the children took possession of the house. After all, it offers them a wealth of different ways of employing their spare time: to play, to dance, to sing, to engage in sport, to produce stage plays, to try their skills as future cosmonauts, to undertake experiments in physics and chemistry, to breed fish, to build functioning aircraft models.

On that day my thoughts wandered back to the past and many memories from my own childhood and school days were revived. I have taken a keen interest in educational issues all my life. In my time we proletarian children

were made to feel in pretty drastic fashion that bourgeois schools had to serve first of all the interests of entrepreneurs and big estate owners. It was therefore no surprise and we took it for granted that as a rule workers' children could attend only elementary schools. A higher education—grammar school and university—was out of the question because of conditions and our fathers' limited earnings. At these schools we future wage labourers were only given as much elementary education as was considered necessary to make the rich richer. They tried in many ways, not least with the use of beatings as arguments, to get it into our heads that the existing order was eternal. The reader already knows why this did not work with me.

Nevertheless, I received eight years of elementary education. This was not at all the case everywhere in Germany between 1918 and 1945 even though eight years' elementary education had been mandatory in the German Reich for a long time. If my school education turned out fairly satisfactory I owe this, as I have said, to some teachers who did try to give us the best the school had to offer. Above all, however, I owe it to the knowledge and experience imparted to me by my parents and to what we acquired in the Young Spartacus League.

This, however, was in stark contrast to the education which the children of the rich received. For them there were no social and material barriers. After four years' elementary education they could go to the so-called higher schools—if they were not sent to private schools from the outset—and achieve the *Abitur*, matriculation standard. Universities and colleges were therefore almost exclusively reserved for children from these circles. There they were prepared for leading positions in society.

I myself was not yet made aware during my school years of what I later realised all the more clearly, namely the pseudo-scientific nature of certain theories, e.g. the reactionary "theory of the gifted child" which suggested that supposedly only children from the then ruling classes were capable of responding to higher education. Personnel policy in capitalist companies and the bourgeois state apparatus was also based on this assumption. Children of workers and peasants, rare cases excepted, were given no access to higher education. The ruling circles safeguarded the education monopoly rigidly.

How shamelessly this attitude was applied in the countryside I discovered during my stay in Pomerania. Despite the mandatory eight years of schooling many village schools had only one classroom and one teacher. He instructed all children from their first to their eighth school year. But it was the estate

owner who determined, according to agricultural work requirements, when there should be lessons and when the schoolchildren had to toil in the fields. The remark of a big Mecklenburg estate owner became well known: One ox in front of the plough and one behind it is good enough for me.

In the Young Communist League and the Communist Party we always considered education issues to be an inseparable part of our overall political struggle against exploitation and oppression, for the development of a new socialist society. We stood for decisive democratic change, including that of the education system. In this we based ourselves on progressive pedagogic thinking concerning the comprehensive and harmonious development of the personality on the basis of a uniform and scientific education for all children. The revolutionary German workers' movement also proved itself heir to everything progressive in the history of the German people and world culture when it came to education issues.

Under Nazi rule all educational establishments had been subjected to the utterly reactionary, aggressive and anti-humanist aims of that system. When we Communists took up our work after the liberation by the Soviet army we faced very difficult problems in the field of education too. The influence of years of Nazi and militarist poison had left disastrous traces on children and young people. But not only that. The Nazi régime had been hostile to culture and education in its policy, and the war had caused chaotic conditions in all educational institutions. In spring 1945 none of these was functioning any longer. There were no school books, no exercise books, hardly any writing material. What was worse, most teachers had been active Nazis, had spread Nazi ideology. As a result they could no longer be used in their profession.

Early and energetic efforts were necessary to get schools and other educational institutions going again and to create at least elementary conditions permitting the children to learn. In this situation it proved useful that the KPD had a plan for the development of education too, one that had already been worked out in 1944 by a commission headed by Wilhelm Pieck. The already often cited KPD manifesto of 11 June 1945 included the educational goals: "Purification of the whole educational system from fascist and reactionary filth. Cultivation of a truly democratic, progressive and free spirit in all schools and teaching institutions."

Such revolutionary measures as the demolition of the reactionary state apparatus, removal of the bourgeoisie from power, democratic land reform and the creation of a democratic administration were prerequisites of the

successful antifascist democratic reform of the education system. It brought about the most fundamental and far-reaching changes in the history of German education.

In mid-1945 the executives of the provincial administrations in the Soviet zone of occupation adopted laws for the democratisation of the schools. For the first time in German school history they stipulated as the goal of education "to bring up youth free from Nazi and militarist ideas, in the spirit of peaceful and friendly cooperation among nations and genuine democracy, towards true humanitarianism." On this basis and in accordance with the demands made by the Potsdam Agreement a new unitary school system was created, one of strictly state and secular character with eight years' elementary schooling for *all* children, a four-year secondary school which leads to matriculation standard and a two to three-year vocational training for all young people.

In 1945/46 80 per cent of all teachers, those who had served the Nazi régime, had to be removed from the educational institutions. They were given opportunity to work in other professions. Years later it would be possible for some of them to be reinstated.

In the short term we had to train new teachers. These could only be people who devoted themselves completely to antifascist democratic education of the young generation. During the school year 1945/46 15,000 and in the school year 1946/47 another 25,000 "new teachers", as they were called then, took up their jobs. They belonged to the first group of antifascist democratic, later socialist intelligentsia. With extraordinary efforts they qualified in evening courses and extramural studies—besides their teaching activity. Many of them are now among our most experienced school directors, senior teachers, party activists and educationalists. And I remember that the youth federation sent many of its members to be trained as teachers at the time.

By consolidating small schools into central schools and sending many new teachers into the countryside the quality of education in rural areas was improved and gradually approached town standards.

In elementary schools we introduced—for the first time in German school history—from the fifth year on scientific instruction in geography, history, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, literature and one foreign language: Russian. The fundamentals of natural and social sciences, the most valuable works of German and world literature, books and drama by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller,

Heinrich Heine, and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Charles Dickens and Stendhal, Honoré de Balzac, Leo Tolstoi, Anton Chekhov and Fyodor Dostoyevski, works by Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Anna Seghers, Friedrich Wolf, Bertolt Brecht and Johannes R. Becher, Nikolai Ostrovski, Maxim Gorki and Mikhail Sholokhov—which up till then had been withheld from the youth of the working population—became subjects of general tuition. Henceforth they were to have a strong influence on the intellectual life of youth.

The creation of the unitary school and the growing possibilities for the children of workers and peasants and for young working people to achieve matriculation standard were decisive steps towards breaking the old educational privileges and enforcing one of the fundamental rights of the young generation, the right to education.

In many years of work, after overcoming many material difficulties and many reservations and backward thinking we succeeded in realising all the educational demands which had been raised by the revolutionary workers' movement since 1848 and even earlier by democratic pedagogues of the bourgeoisie. These were demands for a state-run, secular and unitary education system, scientific orientation of the syllabus and equal opportunity in education.

When I think back to those years and ask myself how we managed to solve these complicated problems on our path to a new education system, one thing needs to be emphasised: the unselfish support we received from the education and cultural officers of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany. With their rich political and pedagogic knowledge and their internationalist attitude they always stood by us. This also meant that they helped to procure paper for the first new school books and pencils, construction material for the most needed school repairs or the most vital requirements of orphans and neglected children. There is a continuous line from the solidarity and support provided by our Soviet friends during the first years to the intensive cooperation between the education ministries and academies of educational sciences of the GDR and the USSR in school policy and educational sciences.

Developments since then have confirmed indisputably that the education policy we followed was right. I may add one remark: Our party, true to its nature and its aims, has always been generous to the young. For this reason we gave boys and girls, politically organised in the Young Pioneers' Federation and the Free German Youth every opportunity right from the

beginning to shape their own lives. We encouraged them to participate actively in the revolutionary changes in our society and to gather new insights in many ways. As Wilhelm Pieck said to the Young Pioneers at that time: "You carry the future of our people ... To those who go to school and study diligently we want to give every opportunity to become great scientists and scholars, outstanding technicians and engineers, great inventors and rationalizers."

The children and young people who more than 30 years ago for the first time had the benefit of the achievements of democratic school reform and made their way as members of the Pioneers' organisation and the FDJ now belong to the generation of the 40 and 50-year-olds. They are the qualified and politically sophisticated workers, engineers and technical designers of our nationally owned industry, the cooperative farmers, agronomists and livestock breeders of our socialist agriculture, the creatively active scientists of our colleges and academies, the army of teachers and cultural workers. They are the selflessly working officials of party and state and all those who defend our achievements.

How contemptuously many of yesterday's stick-in-the-muds view the human race becomes clear from a statement by a certain Hartnacke who was minister for education in Saxony from 1933 to 1935. In 1946 he wrote from West Berlin: "There is no greater error than to believe that one can make the stupid intelligent by instruction. One should also see the danger which lies in people who have learned too much for their measure of intelligence. They become scatterbrains who torment themselves with what they have been unable to digest intellectually."

Why do the reactionaries resist always and everywhere an educational system which offers equal opportunity to all? What is it they fear? Wilhelm Liebknecht declared in 1872 that knowledge is power and power is knowledge. We have built up our educational system, step by step, systematically and continually and observed what society needed and made possible. We also always combined fundamental decisions on social development with decisions on educational policy. With the development of the foundations of socialism in the GDR in the fifties we improved the content and structure of the educational system. Youth was to be enabled to participate actively in socialist society, to work creatively and to lead a cultured life.

We aimed at rooting school more and more deeply in life and endeavoured to perfect steadily the great idea of combining productive work with instruction and gymnastics which Marx had called the only method for the

production of fully developed human beings. Little by little it became clear that eight years of elementary schooling as basic education for all would soon no longer suffice.

We discussed these questions repeatedly in the SED Central Committee in the late fifties and early sixties. Social development in the GDR was characterised by the victory of socialist production relations at that time. We therefore faced the task of shaping the educational system in such a way that it would live up to the requirements of the fully developed socialist society which we were now constructing.

We were also able to rely on good preconditions in the educational system. The first ten-year secondary schools which were to replace the eight-year elementary schools had started operating. Polytechnical instruction was introduced. Many forms of combining instruction and productive work developed. Since 1958 the pupils from the 7th to the 10th grade study one day per week in socialist enterprises in industry and agriculture. In this way they get to know the practical importance of high scientific knowledge and to use their knowledge productively. Many job opportunities open up for them and become motivating forces for their future working life. In addition they become familiar with fundamental problems of scientific and technological progress and the economy. Their political and intellectual horizon is broadened.

The establishment of factory vocational schools in nationally owned enterprises had created new conditions for vocational instruction and for the training of qualified specialised workers. They permitted a close combination of theoretical and practical vocational training. In accordance with the requirements of the economy the system of *Fachschulen*, that is the medium-level technical colleges, was further developed. It was possible to raise the scientific level of instruction at universities and colleges by the introduction of Marxist-Leninist basic studies and by other changes in syllabus and organisation.

During the first half of the sixties results, insights and experiences of the development of school policy up till then were analysed and the foundations for a new comprehensive education law put up for discussion. Millions of citizens took part in the exchange of views. Thousands of suggestions were submitted and carefully used. In 1965 the Volkskammer, on the basis of this democratic preparation, was able to pass the "Law on the unitary socialist education system" which to this day is an important foundation of our school policy. This law deals with all state and social education

establishments in their totality and continuity and provides for all efforts to be directed towards the formation of rounded and harmonious socialist personalities.

Accordingly, the education system of our country is constructed as follows: Children aged one to three are cared for in day nurseries; from age three to six they can attend kindergarten. This is followed by the ten-year general education secondary school. Attendance is obligatory and forms the basis for admission to any further education institution. Today it is completed by more than 90 per cent of all children. After completing the 10th grade the majority of youths—about 85 per cent—move on to vocational instruction institutions and two to three years' specialised apprenticeships. About 15 per cent of the pupils go to various educational institutions which lead up to matriculation standard after they have completed the 10th grade and then on to universities and colleges. This was the route taken by my two daughters. Sonja graduated from Dresden Technical University as a certified technical cybernetics and automation engineer. Erika studied at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg and became a certified lawyer. Young skilled workers who prove themselves in their trade can graduate from specialised colleges. Finally there are diverse possibilities for further education in individual areas of society. Enterprises and other institutions of society have established their own academies and similar education facilities where working people who have completed their training continue their studies after a period of practical employment.

Nowadays the demands made by the law on the unitary socialist education system have been largely met. The curricula are continually updated to the latest level of scientific knowledge. All children have not only a right but also the opportunity to attend the ten-year general education polytechnical secondary school. Attendance at this school is now obligatory. This ten-year secondary school education followed by about two years' vocational training and guaranteed employment are the normal and natural road of development for the children and youth of our country.

Any educational system would be incomplete if it did not take care of children who are physically or mentally handicapped and therefore unable to receive a normal education. For this reason we have spent considerable sums in creating special schools and staffed them with a large number of specially trained pedagogues by whom blind and deaf children as well as children with mental handicaps are instructed, educated and medically looked after. We are proud to be able to accommodate all these children in

such institutions and to give them a suitably differentiated education which approximates the curriculum of the ordinary schools. In addition we have special children's homes for orphans and children separated from their families.

In summing up I should like to say that our education system and its curricula and structures are organised in such a way that all normal and healthy children can complete all its stages without getting into any dead ends. Our state guarantees this not least by granting material support and scholarships and creating a multitude of social facilities, boarding schools for instance.

What about encouragement of the gifted and talented? Decades of experience show that every healthy and mentally normal child can succeed in completing the ten-year course of secondary education and complete specialised vocational training or else attend further education institutions. We have found that on account of the high demands made by our general education curriculum many gifted and talented youngsters emerge and develop.

For their benefit schools, Pioneer and youth organisations run a large number of extra-curricular working groups. There children and youths can pursue their personal inclinations and interests. In the 9th and 10th grades they can opt, according to their inclinations and on a voluntary basis, for instruction in an additional subject of their choice for several hours each week. At the regional and national level the educational authorities in cooperation with the youth federation in the schools arrange scientific and artistic competitions such as Olympiads in mathematics, physics, chemistry and foreign languages, galleries of friendship, painting and drawing competitions and also a competition of choirs and musical instrumentalists. Tens of thousands of children and young people take part in such events and institutions, and in the annual mathematics Olympiad and the gallery of friendship even millions participate. Finally we maintain a number of special schools which are open to those specially gifted in mathematics, sport, music and dancing.

Every education system is subordinate to the ruling ideology. This shows up in the history of education and we have never sought to conceal this. Of course, we teach the scientific world view of the working class at the educational institutions and we educate the young on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. We educate youth in such a way that they learn well, know a lot, work industriously and have a firm political standpoint and take their place in the revolutionary struggle of our time with passion and vigour.

The work of teachers and educators in cooperation with parents and enterprises has resulted in a situation where the vast majority of school leavers consider it perfectly normal to take up a specialised apprenticeship for skilled work after completing secondary school. One of the reasons for this is that they know that they will find satisfaction in their trade or craft and that their prospects are clear and secure. In 1978, for instance, 99 per cent of all those who completed the 10th grade of secondary school, if they did not go on to institutions of further education, took up an apprenticeship.

More than three decades of effort by our state, its teachers and educators and the training in industrial organisations brought about remarkable changes in the structure of qualifications of the working people in the GDR. The share of highly qualified skilled workers among the working population rose to above 60 per cent. Ninety per cent of all graduates from universities and technical training colleges have been educated since 1945. For every 1,000 persons employed in the socialist economy the number of those with university degrees rose from 21.8 in 1961 to 63.2 in 1978, while the proportion of those who have completed a technical training college rose from 39.0 to 115.2. These, I think, are results which show up well internationally.

Every step we took in the development of our education system we took jointly with the working people, above all with the parents. During the years of the democratic school reform progressive parents helped us as "friends of the new school". Since 1951 several hundreds of thousands of mothers and fathers have been elected annually as members of parent-teacher associations and class parents' groups.

We in the Politbureau of the SED's ZK are aware that man's fundamental right to education must continue to be implemented with increasing thoroughness in future. In our socialist society man is the measure of all things. The care for the well-being and healthy all-round development of children is a task for society as a whole and expresses its humanist nature. A caring attitude to children is a part of socialism.

The 8th Educational Congress of the GDR in October 1978 at which Education Minister Margot Honecker read a paper on "The social task of our schools" was able to establish that during the years since the 8th Party Congress of the SED 68,000 new teachers had been recruited and that a third of all teaching premises had been newly built. During this period the government spent more than 1,200 million marks on the equipment of schools with modern teaching aids alone. Comprehensive general education (as the basis

for all further education), sound knowledge and skills are indispensable for productive work, for active participation in the political and intellectual-cultural life of society. This is an absolutely necessary prerequisite for human creativity.

With this in mind we continue to develop our ten-year general education polytechnical secondary school and pay the greatest attention to the communist education of youth, that is: the formation of highly educated, politically convinced, socially active human beings. After all, we are today educating the generation which at the height of their lives will further advance a developed socialist society and bring about the transition to communism.

Our youth will perpetuate what the best of our people have stood for and for which many have sacrificed their lives. They will advance along the road to ■ communist society. To pave this road, to open it up together with youth and to march forward along it has been my constant endeavour.

Years of hard work, in the field of educational policy as in others, lie behind us. All those who have helped in shaping this segment of educational history feel whenever they come together with the children the same joy and the same happiness at the results we have achieved.

I felt such happiness when on 3 October 1979 the Pioneers' Palace was inaugurated, and we were able to tell the children: We have succeeded in building for ourselves a socialist fatherland in which the people and their children can live ■ life of human dignity.



At the 8th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany
in the Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle in Berlin, June 1971.

XX

At the head of the party

At its 16th session on 3 May 1971 the SED's Central Committee elected me unanimously to be its first secretary. Walter Ulbricht had requested to be relieved of this function since his age and his responsibility towards the ZK, the whole party and the people no longer permitted him to exercise this activity.

For me this was a particularly memorable hour as everybody will understand. The party of the working class in whose ranks I had served for more than four decades and which had given meaning and substance to my whole life had called upon me to lead it. This was a great expression of confidence, a decision which moved me deeply. Since my earliest youth I had served in Ernst Thälmann's party, gone through the hard school of antifascist resistance and spent nearly ten years in Nazi imprisonment. Since March 1946 ■ member of the KPD Central Committee, I have belonged to the party executive and to the ZK of the SED, respectively, since the Unification Congress of April 1946. In 1950 I was elected a candidate member of the Politbureau and in 1958 a full member of the Politbureau and ■ Secretary of the ZK.

More than two decades of work in the Politbureau had marked my life decisively. I had worked side by side with Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl,

Walter Ulbricht, Friedrich Ebert, Bruno Leuschner, Hermann Matern, Heinrich Rau and Herbert Warnke. Through my activity in various functions within the collective leadership I had been prepared in every way for the highest office in our party.

It had proved a great good fortune for the German working class and for the people of the GDR that since the foundation of the Thälmann Central Committee of the KPD we had always been able to maintain a unified and continual party leadership. I was fully aware of the great responsibility which attached to my new function. I considered the stable, battle-hardened collective leadership of the SED to be the guarantee that our ZK and our whole party could live up to the increasing demands made by the further development of an advanced socialist society.

At the beginning of the seventies our party faced important decisions. New development problems had emerged which demanded an answer. It was necessary to work out the principles and the main directions of the SED's strategy and tactics as well as the domestic and foreign policy of the GDR, to determine the ends and means of the further progress of the GDR's socialist society.

When we speak of party leadership, this means first and foremost the Central Committee which is elected by the highest representative body of the party, the party congress. Its task is to direct the whole activity of the party between the congresses and to organise the execution of its resolutions. Thus the SED's 9th Party Congress which was held from 18 to 22 May 1976 in Berlin in the newly erected Palace of the Republic at Marx-Engels-Platz elected 145 members and 57 candidates of the ZK and 30 members and six candidates of the Central Auditing Commission. The ZK, which is headed by the general secretary, is accountable to the party congress; it usually meets twice a year. The auditing commissions examine at regular intervals whether the work of the party bodies, the party apparatus and the party institutions is sufficiently well organised and analyse the work on petitions, suggestions, comments and criticisms as well as the financial management of the party. The Central Auditing Commission elected Kurt Seibt as its chairman.

For the political management of the work between plenary sessions the ZK elects the Politbureau which concerns itself with all matters of principle affecting the domestic policy and international activities of the SED, the leadership of the state and the economy and the other areas of our socialist society. This collective leadership body of the party combines all personalities

required for competent decision-making, including the leading representatives of the state and the most important social organisations.

Experienced politicians of several generations belong to this body to which 19 members and nine candidates were elected on 22 May 1976 at the first meeting of the ZK. The members elected to the Politbureau by the ZK were Hermann Axen, Friedrich Ebert, Werner Felfe, Gerhard Grüneberg, Kurt Hager, Heinz Hoffmann, Erich Honecker, Werner Krolkowski, Werner Lamberz, Erich Mielke, Günter Mittag, Erich Mückenberger, Konrad Naumann, Alfred Neumann, Albert Norden, Horst Sindermann, Willi Stoph, Harry Tisch and Paul Verner; candidates of the Politbureau were Horst Dohlus, Joachim Hermann, Werner Jarowsky, Günther Kleiber, Egon Krenz, Inge Lange, Margarete Müller, Gerhard Schürer and Werner Walde.

Among them were comrades who had exercised senior political functions in the KPD or the SPD during the Weimar Republic and who had participated in the struggle against fascism and war; some of them had been confined in Nazi gaols and concentration camps for many years. Others were Communists of the younger generation who had proved themselves in the revolutionary reformation of society since the liberation in May 1945 and were now exercising leading functions in the party, in the state or in other areas of society or are in the leadership of the trade unions or the socialist youth organisation.

For the management of the day-to-day work, mainly for the execution and control of party resolutions and the selection of cadres, the ZK elects ■ secretariat. So it was also on 22 May 1976 at the already mentioned first meeting of the ZK after the SED's 9th Party Congress. The following were confirmed as secretaries of the SED's ZK: Hermann Axen, Horst Dohlus, Gerhard Grüneberg, Kurt Hager, Joachim Hermann, Erich Honecker, Werner Jarowsky, Werner Krolkowski, Werner Lamberz, Inge Lange, Albert Norden and Paul Verner.

All fundamental questions of social development are discussed within the Politbureau in an open, comradely and objective manner. Thoughts and experiences from various points of view are entered into the debates in order to work out a common position for collective resolution.

In 1970 the Politbureau repeatedly tackled economic problems. It had become inevitable that ■ number of additional projects to the economic plan would have to be stopped because they had proved to be unrealistic. They would have seriously hampered the continuous development of the

economy. Therefore we had to take steps to stabilise the economy and to secure its proportionate development. It had to be made clear that socialist society was being built by people and for people and that material production represented the foundation of social wealth.

At the time we did a lot to improve the work of the party in all areas of social life. In members' meetings and also in personal discussions I had with many workers a wealth of suggestions, criticisms and advice was voiced all of which served this purpose. It was all directed towards further strengthening the close ties between the SED and the working population.

At the 14th session of the SED's ZK in December 1970 I emphasised that the power of the party depended on how every single comrade in his place and in the ranks of the party collective contributed his share to the common socialist cause. We were acting upon Lenin's principle that the party must never shrink back from reality as it is. We stressed that man with his material and cultural needs, the development of his personality and the development of socialist relations in society are the focus of attention of party policy. At this meeting of the ZK the foundations were laid for an economic policy which was adopted by the 8th Party Congress in June 1971. It marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of the GDR.

In preparing the SED's 8th Party Congress we were concerned with the question of how one could—on the basis of the good results so far achieved—express and realise the meaning of socialism, i. e. to do everything for the benefit of the people, in the objective of our economic and social policy with even more consistency. Of course, we knew that even with considerable economic successes it would not be possible to meet all wishes and expectations. It was therefore important to weigh the targets of economic and social policy carefully and relate them to the available means and to the possible increase in efficiency in the economy.

Accordingly the SED's 8th Party Congress resolved and made it its central policy to continue to raise the material and cultural standard of living and, by means of an accelerated pace of development in socialist production, increased efficiency, scientific and technological progress and growth of labour productivity, to create the necessary conditions for this.

An important point of departure for our plans in the seventies was that no area of social life should be neglected. Only in this way would it be possible for social relations and individual capacities to be fully developed, and for more favourable possibilities to be opened up for people to give their lives richer content and culture. It is a well-known fact that man lives not

by bread alone but without bread he cannot live at all. We therefore not only had to make sure that material needs were met and supply improved but also that justice was done to the increasing demand for education and culture. A comprehensive programme of social policy was undertaken. Its centrepiece is the construction of homes, about which I shall be writing in more detail later. We took steps to care for the needs of the population still better and to maintain retail prices for essential goods and services, public transport and rents which had been kept stable in our republic for more than 20 years. We are particularly interested in the step-by-step improvement of working and living conditions in the factories. The number of working people who still have to work under aggravated conditions will be reduced by 25 to 30 per cent by 1980. Catering facilities and medical care at work are being improved.

The net income of GDR citizens increases annually by about 4 per cent. Subsidies from the state budget are steadily increasing. We use them primarily for the expansion of home construction, for the stabilisation of retail prices, for the maintenance of fees and rents, for the improvement of education and health services and for recreation, culture and sports. Further measures are aimed at increasing minimum wages and old age and disability pensions, at longer basic holidays for all working people, longer holidays for shift workers, longer maternity leave and the step-by-step introduction of the 40-hour working week. All this has a palpably positive effect on the life of all GDR citizens.

In short, we endeavour to raise the standard of living for all our people continuously. Citizens of all classes, all walks of life and all age groups thus profit.

We consider it the fundamental task of economic policy in a developed socialist society to secure social progress by means of a lasting substantial increase in efficiency both in the short and in the long term. This is what we mean by the unity of economic and social policy. Of course, the demands made by the citizens increase and become more differentiated as education, prosperity and cultural standards are raised. Experience tells that this can be dealt with successfully only if the overwhelming majority of people support our policy wholeheartedly and throw their weight behind its implementation.

At the 8th Party Congress I was re-elected a member of the ZK and, at the first meeting of the latter, also first secretary of the ZK. The policy laid down by the 8th Party Congress found a strong resonance among the

population. Numerous discussions I had with workers' collectives in factories and residential areas and many letters which I received showed that it was well understood in the country how work performance benefited the individual as well as society. In the end everybody co-determines by his contribution to productivity how much can be consumed.

The commitment of the working people to our economic and social policy, their knowledge that under socialism the fruits of labour belong to those who perform it, are of the greatest importance for success. The realisation of our plans and aims rests essentially on the influence of the masses on management and planning and on their daily initiative. We are of the opinion that the awareness of millions of people is a tremendous life force of socialist society. Our maxim is: We want to perfect the socialist society more and more with the help of all the people for all the people. Nothing can be done without the people! From my own experience I can confirm that in this the trade unions, the youth organisation, the Chamber of Technology (the mass organisation of the technical intelligentsia) and many other organisations play an outstanding part.

At the beginning of 1972, at a function of the district party organisation of Leipzig, I was able to point out that our economy was developing successfully along the lines set out at the 8th Party Congress. The mobilising power of our plans, which were based on the objective data and our realistic possibilities, showed up clearly. Production made further progress in continuity and stability. The conditions for higher efficiency and faster economic growth improved. In view of this the leadership of the party and the state could take more far-reaching measures for the realisation of our social policy programme earlier than had originally been foreseen. The SED's ZK, jointly with the National Executive of the FDGB and the Council of Ministers, worked out under my leadership the relevant directives.

The expansion of industry and the modernisation and reconstruction of factories proved to be a key issue. New manufacturing plant, above all in the chemical and engineering industries and in particular in the electrical and electronic engineering sectors, although also in light industry, had to be created and utilised to the maximum.

The increase in industrial efficiency during the first half of the seventies was in large measure the result of increased intensification in all branches of industry. This increased intensification in manufacturing was considered by us as the main avenue towards further advancement of the economy. We used extensive investment for the modernisation of plant and equipment in

industry, its reconstruction and large-scale expansion. We newly installed 40 per cent of all industrial plant and equipment during the five-year plan period from 1971 to 1975. More ~~use~~ was made of science and technology in this intensification drive. This found its expression in industry (mainly in the form of new products and new technology), in the development and production of more efficient machines and equipment, in considerable materials savings and higher quality of our products. About half the volume of production in the metal-working industry in 1975 consisted of products which had been newly developed or upgraded during the five-year plan period from 1971 to 1975.

I should like to emphasise in this context that the scientific and technological cooperation with the USSR and the other CMEA countries was expanded, which was of considerable significance for the intensified use of plant and resources in our economy. The GDR participated in about 500 contracts and agreements on specialisation and cooperation in research and production. As one of many examples I may mention the creation of a unified system for electronic data processing equipment.

But as things are in life, there is no smooth road into the future, no progress without difficulties and new problems. During the second half of the seventies we faced a number of complicated issues. I may recall that around 1974 the most serious crisis of surplus production of the postwar years ensued in the highly developed capitalist countries. Unemployment increased abruptly. The rate of inflation rose. The real incomes of the working people slumped. Even after the beginning of a certain economic recovery during the following years the number of unemployed people increased rather than decreased on account of extensive capitalist rationalisation measures. A period of social tremor had begun for these countries. The stability of world markets was undermined. Currency and financial crises had contributed to this. Energy and important raw materials were getting more expensive at a breathtaking pace.

Here I want to point out just one particularly important aspect of these events. The economy of the GDR, which is a highly developed but small industrial country, is very closely interlinked with foreign economies. We naturally do most of our foreign trade with friendly socialist countries, particularly the USSR. Especially since 1971, not least because of the process of détente, our trade with western industrial countries has also increased rapidly. Our economy was therefore all the more affected by the negative changes in world markets, both where exports and imports were concerned.

In these circumstances it became absolutely necessary to work still harder at the mobilisation of our own raw material and energy resources. It was obvious that the situation on world markets as well as the necessary efforts to expand our own energy and raw materials basis would add to the burden on our economy.

We examined the situation closely once more and drew in the ZK and in the government the conclusions for the further structural development of the economy, for investment and import and export strategy. All in all we concluded that we would continue our programme of full employment, the common good, growth and stability. The conditions in our socialist society would enable us to overcome the difficulties and to achieve the intended targets by increased efficiency. It was obvious that this would not be easy going.

In the middle of 1975 when the SED's ZK began its preparations for the 9th Party Congress, it could be clearly seen that our line of a unified economic and social policy proved its validity. The industry and efforts of the workers, the cooperative farmers, the intelligentsia and all other working people were bearing fruit.

It filled me with satisfaction that thanks to the growing activity of the working people we had succeeded in fully realising the resolutions of the 8th Party Congress. By 1975 the GDR's national income in comparison to 1970 had been increased by 30 per cent, industrial production had grown by 37 per cent and our foreign trade by 88 per cent. All this formed the foundation for a substantial increase of the real income of the citizens, for further expansion of the material and technological basis of the economy and of the various fields of social activity.

This favourable balance-sheet raised not only the question of what the next steps should be. It also made possible and required decisions on long-term social development. In the Politbureau we deliberated intensively on these issues. It was a matter of working out the features and criteria of an advanced socialist society and taking account of the increasing complexity of the social processes. The scientific and technological revolution had to be still more closely linked with the advantages of socialism, and the material and technological basis of socialism had to be further developed.

In view of the new social issues which had evolved we considered it indicated to draw up a new party programme. For this purpose a programme commission under my chairmanship was formed. This collective body, with the participation of the broadest sections of the population, did significant

work. The general, proven and valid guiding principles of socialist and communist development were applied to concrete conditions in the GDR and combined at the same time the tasks for the present and the future. In all this we were concerned to base ourselves on the positions of Marxism-Leninism and to draw on the experiences of fraternal parties, in particular those of the CPSU. The objectives of social policy had, of course, to be given their proper place in the answers to the principal questions of social development.

In this too we adhered to the well-tried custom of consulting the working people on all social issues. The drafts for the SED's programme, the directive for the five-year plan covering the development of the economy during the years 1976 to 1980 and the party's constitution were submitted to the members of the party and the whole population for discussion. It gave rise to thousands of proposals, suggestions and comments which enabled us to make valuable additions and amendments. It may justifiably be said that the programme of our party bears the signature of the whole population.

I had good reason to declare at the SED's 9th Party Congress in May 1976 that with the further structuring of the developed socialist society in the GDR the fundamental prerequisites for the gradual transition to communism were being created. On behalf of the SED Central Committee I suggested that the unity of economic and social policy be continued on the basis of the advanced level of development which had been achieved. At the same time I pointed out that the new qualitatively higher economic and social targets demanded a substantial increase in economic performance.

This political course, which was unanimously approved by the Party Congress, meant the consistent continuation of the policy of the 8th Party Congress. We deliberately held fast to everything that had helped our progress so far and with all our strength promoted everything new which served our further advance. The highest commandment of our policy is and remains the welfare of the workers and of all working people, the happiness of the people in socialism and peace.

The Party Congress adopted the SED's programme and the other documents unanimously. This was a decision of great consequence. It did, after all, determine the course for a period of time spanning several five-year plans. With these targets in view the people of the GDR have a clear and safe road before them.

I considered my election ■■ general secretary of the SED's ZK as an honour and an expression of confidence and as a commitment not to spare my

energies in pursuance of the policy stipulated by the Party Congress. As our experience proves, under socialism every step forward makes higher demands on the party.

On the 30th anniversary of our republic I was able to declare that our people under the leadership of the SED had moved ahead on a road of fundamental revolutionary changes in all fields of life. Our state has literally been resurrected out of ruins. It was a road of hard work, not a few sacrifices and perpetual class struggle with imperialism. Many difficulties have had to be overcome, many newly arising problems mastered and many privations accepted. But never before in German history has there been a German state in which the people could breathe as freely, could open up the sources of wealth for themselves, could use and multiply all material and intellectual values for their own well-being as in our workers' and peasants' state. This became particularly obvious in the seventies, so far the most successful chapter in the GDR's history.

It is my conviction that on account of what has been achieved—always on the assumption that peace can be preserved—we can look to the future with optimism. Without doubt, the eighties will bring no small tasks of their own, particularly in the economic field. The socialist economy will always be oriented towards growth because our society needs qualitative and quantitative growth in order to achieve its social targets. Inversely, it makes this growth possible by consistently making more effective use of resources without destroying the natural environment.

I have no intention of giving the impression that we are looking at things through rose-tinted spectacles. Many contradictions will have to be dealt with. We cannot make our tasks and the road to their achievement any easier than they really are. This will continue to be the case.

Not infrequently visitors from the capitalist hemisphere ask: "How do you manage to preach full employment, stable prices and material security at a time when we have to fight crises, unemployment and inflation?" Well, we do not just preach it, we carry it out. The answer lies in the nature of our socialist society, in socialist ownership of the means of production and the potential of the working people arising therefrom. Rationalisation, for instance, is a concept with which the citizens of our country are familiar. As a rule they participate actively in it. They know that through it their work becomes more effective and that their conditions of work will be improved. Rationalisation by which one loses one's job, by which one is thrown out of active working life with all that this entails—in short, capitalist ration-

alisation—is unknown here. It may be characteristic of the profit-oriented capitalist mode of production—we live differently. Nobody needs to worry about his right to work or finding a job. These are guaranteed by the constitution and are an everyday reality. The principle formulated by Karl Marx “From each according to his abilities and to each according to his work” has a determining validity in socialist society and is one of the inalienable social facts in our country.

Of course, our country is not an “island” in a world economy marked by increasing prices. But price stability for the supply of the population with basic foodstuffs and other requirements of daily life, for services, public transport and rents, is considered and treated as an element of material security. We are of the opinion that, given the great sense of initiative of the working people and the increase of labour productivity, we shall solve those problems which cannot be solved by price increases. We want to achieve by various means such an increase in labour productivity that the standard of living which we have attained can be safeguarded and gradually improved further. The preconditions for this derive, among other things, from the fact that we are allied with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries and are cooperating ever more closely with them.

Having spoken about material security, let me add one remark. For us this is a very broad concept. We understand the right to education, creative self-realisation in one’s work and spare time in such a way as to include free medical care, satisfactory old age pensions and certainly not least living accommodation worthy of human beings.



At the U'S stand during the traditional walkabout tour
of the Leipzig Spring Fair, 11 March 1979.

XXI

A highly industrialised country

There are 16,756,000 people who live in the GDR. Our country has a surface area of 108,177 square kilometres. If one traverses it by air from its southernmost to its northernmost point, from Bad Brambach to Cape Arkona, it takes a good half-hour to do the 500-kilometre trip. In an east-west direction the distance is 350 kilometres and takes just under half an hour. Our republic is thus not one of the biggest countries in Europe, let alone the world. But if one looks at the volume, the structure and the quality of its industrial production it is one of the ten most developed industrial nations of the world. Measured by the consumption of important food items such as meat, our republic occupies 14th place in the world, by vegetable consumption 9th place, by leather shoes 8th place. Measured by TV sets per inhabitant it takes fifth place in the world. In terms of doctors it comes 12th, and in terms of hospital beds 11th. Where day nurseries and kindergartens are concerned the GDR is in the world forefront. Also with regard to average life expectancy it is among the front runners with 68.8 years for men and 74.7 for women, according to 1978 statistics.

These few figures cannot, of course, reflect the whole measure of our achievements to date in the formation of an advanced socialist society and what it means for our people. I am thinking of the high level of education,

the cultural wealth, the material security and the clear prospects for the future. To live without a constant feeling of uncertainty of one's existence is the dream of many people all over the world. But for countless numbers of them it still remains a dream. Under socialism it has become reality.

Since the foundation of the GDR our pace of economic development has aroused the world's attention. In 1946 the volume of industrial production on the territory of what is now the GDR was down to 42.1 per cent of what it had been in 1936. In 1949 it reached 87.6 per cent of its prewar level. But in little more than 30 years, from 1946 to 1979, it grew 22 times. While in 1949 a hundred million marks worth of industrial goods were produced in a working day the figure for 1979 was already more than a thousand million marks, more than ten times as much. Nowadays, the GDR, with only a quarter of the population of the former German Reich of 1936, turns out almost 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ times the latter's industrial production.

Agriculture developed no less remarkably. For instance, in 1938 the number of beef cattle was 3.7 million, and in 1946 it was only 2.8 million. By 1949 it had increased to 3.3 million, by 1960 to 4.6 million, by 1970 to 5.2 million, by 1979 to 5.6 million. In 1938 there were 5.7 million pigs, of which in 1946 there were only 2.0 million left; by 1949 we had 4.3 million, by 1960 already 8.3 million, by 1970 almost 9.7 million and finally in 1979 12.1 million. Average cereal yields per hectare between 1934 and 1938 were 2.1 tonnes. In 1946 there were only 1.5 tonnes, in 1949 1.81 tonnes, in 1960 2.75 tonnes, in 1970 2.82 tonnes, in 1978 3.86 tonnes and in 1979—caused by unfavourable weather and resulting poor harvesting conditions—3.60 tonnes.

These sober figures give a clear indication of the increasing strength of our people on its way to socialism. Among the latter's criteria is also the fact that 100 per cent of industrial output and 97 per cent of agricultural output are produced in socialist enterprises.

We pay special attention to national income. It reflects the new wealth produced by creative human work. In 1979 the national income of the GDR reached an absolute volume of 166,600 million marks. This is 7.4 times the figure for 1949. During the past ten years the cumulative national income of 1.4 billion marks was the exact equivalent of that of the preceding 20 years. During the last eight years alone the national income of the GDR increased by 47 per cent.

Everything in the economy is derived from national income: consumption as well as accumulation in the interest of extended reproduction. Because

it increased steadily it was possible to increase the population's per capita monthly real income by 58 per cent between 1970 and 1979. As there is no inflation in our republic this means a net improvement of living standards. This finds expression in the fact that private and public consumption and retail sales per capita increased by 50 per cent each.

Investment in the economy amounted to 51,200 million marks in 1979. The equivalent figure for 1970 was 34,400 million. In 1949 investment had been 2,900 million marks. In industry alone the value of capital goods amounted to 289,000 million marks. For the economy as a whole the figure is 686,000 million marks. This is a substantial portion of our total national assets.

On this stable material basis we develop our economic potential further. Combined figures, however, do not tell the whole story. It has to be pointed out for instance that industrial production of goods calculated at effective prices amounted to 350,600 million marks in 1979. But one must take into account that there is a change in structure in favour of those branches of industry which strongly influence scientific and technological progress. Compared with 1970 production in the electronics industry had increased by 194 per cent by 1979, production of man-made fibres by 121 per cent, plastics manufacture by 121 per cent, machine-tools by 122 per cent and agricultural machinery by 117 per cent. Taking the average pace of development of industrial production this was a total increase of 66 per cent. This shows that we not only put a strong accent on quantitative expansion but changed the qualitative structure as well.

Since 1970 94 per cent of the increase in national income, i.e. the largest part, has been achieved by increasing labour productivity. In industry alone labour productivity increased by about 50 per cent. In order to create one million marks worth of national income 61 working people were required in 1970, in 1979 only 42. We endeavour to increase labour efficiency continually in the interest of the people. At the same time we consider it necessary and make it a priority to reduce the specific consumption of major energy sources, raw and other materials. Compared with 1970 we succeeded in reducing this specific consumption between 1971 and 1979 by 24 per cent for rolled steel, and even by 36 per cent in the metalworking industry. Nowadays as raw material prices climb rapidly this trend is of particular importance. We systematically used science and technology to increase efficiency. According to an economic analysis 90 per cent of the increase in labour productivity was due to them in 1979. In 1975 their share was

still only 55 per cent. Considering our labour resources it is obvious that in future labour productivity will have to grow faster than industrial production.

Between 1976 and 1979 alone 880,000 jobs in manufacturing, construction and transport were either restructured or reallocated. This reduced at the same time the share of such industrial workers as had to work under aggravated conditions from 25.7 per cent in 1971 to 20.1 per cent in 1979.

This approach to increased labour efficiency and quality shows our society's ability to combine labour resources and material potential effectively and to achieve substantial economic results. It is well known that nowadays every percentage point of increase in output is of much greater significance than it was 10 years ago. In 1980 each per cent of national income represents 1,600 million marks whereas in 1970 the figure was only just over 1,000 million marks. Today material increase in output must be achieved with less and less consumption of energy, raw and other materials. It is therefore all the more significant that we have maintained and shall maintain our continuous growth.

This is closely related to our foreign trade. While in 1949 the GDR's total foreign trade at effective prices amounted to 2,700 million marks, the 1979 figure was about 108,800 million marks. This is a 40-fold increase. It should be borne in mind here that this is the foreign trade of a country that depends mainly on its manufacturing industry.

Conversely, the development of our foreign trade strongly influences our national economy. In 1979 68.8 per cent of this foreign trade was done with the socialist countries, 36.1 per cent of it with the Soviet Union. Because of their socialist nature these are the most advantageous trade relations for us.

This review of the GDR's economy of today shows clearly the enormous increase in economic capacity over the past decades, particularly in the seventies. Its firm foundation consists in the socialist relations of production which for a long time have been the sole basis of production. They have been continually perfected and have reached an advanced stage. A strong material and technological basis has been created the structure of which is determined not only by traditional industries but also by branches which did not previously exist on what is now our territory. The working class and the whole people as owners of the means of production have brought forth what is largely a new material basis of production. They have proved

themselves to be the creators of ~~new~~ productive forces and intellectual values.

Taking together all the facts and figures mentioned at the beginning, it is hardly an exaggeration to speak of great stability and dynamism. After all, the capitalist German state, the FRG, has not managed to rid itself of the symptoms of profound economic crisis during the seventies. Its economy is operating below capacity. For years already the number of unemployed has been near the one million mark. Hundreds of thousands of young people do not get an opportunity to learn a trade or craft. In our opinion, and not only in ours, these are serious defects of capitalist society.

Economic success has not at all fallen into the lap of the GDR. On the contrary. The beginning of the road to socialism was already difficult and demanded many material and personal sacrifices. The history of the GDR shows what creative power the workers allied with the peasants, the intelligentsia and other working people can develop under the leadership of the party once they have thrown off the fetters of capitalist profit rule and have taken their fate into their own hands.

It is well known that the immediate war damage in the territory of the GDR was considerably heavier than in West Germany. About 45 per cent of all industry was in ruins—in the engineering industry it was even 70 per cent—while in the Western part of Germany by contrast it was only 20 per cent. Energy production either did not work at all or only for a few hours per day. 5,000 railway bridges and about 4,500 road bridges had been completely destroyed. Only with the greatest of difficulties could production be resumed because there was a shortage of machinery, energy, raw materials, fuel and other materials.

Starting conditions which had been unfavourable from the outset were made worse still by the arbitrary splitting-up of the organically grown economy of the former German Reich. This caused additional disproportions. Historically there had always been a difference between East and West in the degree of industrialisation and level of productivity in Germany. In 1936 what is today GDR territory—then 30.4 per cent of the Reich's total surface area with only 17.0 per cent of Germany's industrial production—was far below the level of industrialisation in the Western territories. After the splitting-up of the country considerable disproportions had to be overcome. Above all industry was lacking a sufficient raw materials basis. There was practically ~~no~~ ancillary industry to supply the engineering industry.

More than 10 years ago, at the 7th Party Congress of the SED in April 1967, I posed the question ■ to what might have become of the capitalist gentlemen if in 1945 we had had 120 blast furnaces in the East and the West had had only four instead of vice versa? What would the capitalist gentlemen have done if we had had 93 per cent of the iron works and they only 7 per cent instead of vice versa?

The reason why the GDR today is one of the ten most highly developed industrial nations in the world is not primarily to be found in the fact that the former Germany had been an industrial country. As is well known, this is often claimed in the West. The truth is, however, that our people by their own strength and with active support, mainly from our Soviet friends, cleared away the rubble left by the Second World War, overcame squalor and chaos and created a modern socialist industrial state.

Construction and reconstruction of industry demanded all the more effort as the adversaries of the GDR tried everything to hinder it. I have already said elsewhere how much damage was done by the cold war against us. In addition there was the open border with the FRG and Berlin-West. In 1948 a ruthless economic boycott against the GDR was launched from the territory of the FRG. Arbitrary disturbances in the trade between the two states, luring away of labour, particularly specialists, and economic sabotage by paid agents—all this was aimed at ruining the GDR.

Renowned West German Social Democrats like the late economist Professor Fritz Baade declared then that the FRG “morally owed 100,000 million marks in reparations” to the GDR for the damages caused to the latter by economic warfare as well as for the 4,300 million dollars in reparations paid by our republic on behalf of all of Germany. According to our calculations our losses between 1951 and 1961 amounted to a loss of production of about 112,000 million marks. The amount of money we had spent on the training of individuals who had been lured away came to more than 16,000 million marks.

Any reasonably objective observer can imagine how much effort was needed to compensate for these enormous losses. Even after we had safely secured our state borders with the FRG and Berlin-West the effects of the aggressive imperialist policy on the economic growth of the GDR was noticeable in many ways. As ■ result of this deliberately inflicted damage the GDR was able to achieve an increase in national income of only 7,000 million marks between 1960 and 1963. The losses in national income which had been inflicted on us were roughly equal to our national investment

between 1950 and 1965. If we had not been robbed of these funds we could have built, for instance, 4 million homes or 100 steel works with a capacity of a million tonnes each for the same amount of money.

If one compares our successes with the economic growth in the Federal Republic one must emphasise that by contrast to the development there we achieved our results without exploitation of foreign workers. For many years now about two million foreign workers have been employed in the FRG. When after our border had been secured no more members of our work force could be lured away from the GDR, that figure rose dramatically. The sustenance and training of these people had cost their home countries more than 100,000 million marks from which the FRG benefited without paying these countries anything in return. This was and is an important source of extra profits and a decisive factor in the economic strengthening of the FRG. For the foreign workers are grossly underpaid and disadvantaged in many other respects.

Not infrequently visitors to our country are surprised at the dynamism of economic development here—especially in the seventies—which has permitted us successfully to implement the largest programme of social policy in the history of the GDR. I may reiterate here the principle which guides every single one of our decisions: To do everything for the benefit of the people, for the interests of the working class, of the cooperative farmers, the intelligentsia and the other working people. We consider it the highest goal of socialist production to care for the material, intellectual and cultural needs of all members of society in a constantly rising measure. We must therefore always find the right ways and means of living up to these goals. This is in fact the purpose and meaning of what we call the unity of economic and social policy.

Marx's statement that under socialism the worker for the first time becomes the ultimate purpose of production remains decisive for us. Marx called it the "basic principle" of the socialist order of society to secure the "full and free development of each individual". But he also pointed out that the "free unhampered, progressive and universal development of the productive forces is itself the precondition of society and therefore of its reproduction". According to Lenin the goal of socialist production consists in "securing the *highest* welfare and the free *all-round* development of *all* members of society".

These fundamental insights as applied to the concrete situation in our country have been proved completely right by the results of our economic

policy. Its "secret" is the socialist planned economy on the basis of public ownership of the means of production. It means direction of all social development by the party of the working class and its scientifically based policy.

As I explained on behalf of the Central Committee to the delegates of the 9th Party Congress of the SED, we shall continue this policy of full employment and popular welfare, of growth and stability. We shall not be diverted from it by any "market policy advice".

In our new party programme we have spelled out the intensification of social production as the main road in the economic development of the GDR. Intensification makes possible that increase in efficiency which we need in order to raise living standards still further, to modernise and expand the material and technological basis of socialism, and to do everything necessary to prepare the gradual transition to communism.

We know that we still have a lot to do in this respect. Above all the strains on foreign trade, which have resulted from price explosions on world markets, make this no easy task. Nevertheless we have a set of clear economic bearings in the form of the annual economic plans, which have been thoroughly discussed with the working people and on the basis of which the bigger tasks still lying ahead of us must also be mastered.

What are we concentrating on? In the first place we shall continue our well-trying economic and social policy. Accordingly we endeavour to increase the output potential of our economy and in so doing to make use of the qualitative factors of economic growth. Thus it is a question of the acceleration of scientific and technological progress for the purpose of intensification, of progressive rationalisation in factories and combines, and of higher quality, modern technology and efficiency. We shall therefore also be rapidly developing and effectively applying micro-electronics and other advanced sectors of industry. We aim at the most effective and most economical use of funds and the utilisation of all reserves in order to reduce material consumption in production and to achieve a bigger distributable final product, more and better goods.

With the help of science and technology we want to increase labour productivity beyond the measure we have so far been used to, to reduce manning levels and to improve the ratio between input and output decisively. We fully realise that scientific and technological progress will be decisive for the solution of all other problems. For this reason we are anxious to make use of all the possibilities it offers.

In addition to all this, socialist competition in which all working people take part and which is gaining in breadth and quality, is a source of initiative and innovation. Not the least of its results is the generation of strong impulses for the citizen's sense of responsibility towards society.

The sure guarantee for advance in our socialist development and our international activity is our indestructible relationship with the Soviet Union and the other states of the socialist community. We shall never forget that the solidarity of our socialist allies, in particular that of the Soviet Union, has helped the GDR to stand up to all the imperialist assaults it was exposed to as the westernmost outpost of socialism in Europe.

When I was awarded the Order of Lenin on 13 May 1973 Comrade L.I. Brezhnev said: "Since the first days of existence of the socialist state of German workers and peasants the Soviet Communists, the Soviet Union have stood by your side. The relationship of all-round cooperation and brotherly friendship which have developed between our countries is appreciated by us as one of the greatest achievements of the postwar period, as an outstanding proof that it is precisely the socialist order which is capable of creating a genuine brotherly bond between nations."

It can be established that the history of the GDR is at the same time the history of friendship and increasingly intensive cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. With regard to the economy in particular, these relations were right from the beginning an essential part of the life and development of the GDR. They were and are decisive for the rise of our country, they have proved themselves as time went by and are stable. They have been perpetually intensified and continue to be intensified. The importance of economic cooperation with the USSR for the GDR became clearly visible in the fifties. The pig iron and rolled steel, grain, tractors and other goods which we received then were a vital help in the construction and reconstruction of our socialist economy. At the same time a huge market opened up for our manufacturing industry, which offered a safe basis for the development of the planned economy in our country.

Between 1950 and 1978 the volume of foreign trade between our countries increased twenty-five-fold. The Soviet Union is by far our biggest trading partner. On its part the GDR has been for many years the biggest trading partner of the USSR. We receive a large part of our necessary imports of primary energy and industrial raw materials from the USSR. These included during the five-year plan from 1976 to 1980 amongst other things more than 88 million tonnes of oil, more than 21,000 million cubic metres of natural

gas, 21 million tonnes of coal, nearly 16 million tonnes of rolled steel, 425,000 tonnes of cotton and many other items. Besides these substantial imports the import of industrial plant and implements for rationalisation of our economy is steadily growing in importance. At present already more than 30 per cent of our total imports from the Soviet Union are engineering products—an expression of the increasing international socialist division of labour in the interests of both countries.

For many years the GDR has supplied its Soviet partner with iron and steel rolling equipment, forging and moulding equipment, ships, fishing vessels, railway carriages, refrigerator wagons, agricultural machinery, equipment for the light, food and printing industries and telecommunications. One example: we supplied in the period up to 1979 the Soviet merchant and fishing fleet with 3,038 vessels amounting to a total of 4.1 million register tons. Between 1960 and 1979 the USSR imported *inter alia* 21,615 railway carriages and 77,500 machine tools from the GDR. Our Soviet friends have confirmed to me time and again that engineering and electrical engineering products from the GDR occupy a firm place in the supply of the Soviet economy. We are very happy to know that these products enjoy a good reputation with the Soviet experts.

Between 1981 and 1985 trade between our republic and the Soviet Union will reach ■ volume of 48,000 million roubles or 240,000 million marks. This is unique in the development of trade between two states. We shall import from the USSR during these five years for instance 95 million tonnes of oil, 32,500 million cubic metres of natural gas, 21 million tonnes of coal, 8.5 million tonnes of iron ore, 4.8 million tonnes of pig iron, 650,000 tonnes of aluminium, 211,500 tonnes of copper, 7.7 million cubic metres of cut timber, 457,000 tonnes of wood pulp and 440,000 tonnes of cotton. At the same time plant and equipment which the Soviet side has agreed to supply us with, are of great importance for our material and technological basis. It is obvious that the GDR will make, in accordance with the structure of its economy, appropriate exports to the Soviet Union.

Considerable progress has also been made in scientific and technological cooperation with the Soviet Union. Of particular world renown are the multispectral camera for satellite observation of the earth from outer space, plasma melting technology, highly efficient processes for the manufacture of low-density polyethylene, polyester fibres and polyamid filaments and plant for continuous cold rolling of steel tubes. The CMEA countries have achieved outstanding success in the realisation of the Intercosmos pro-

gramme to which the GDR also contributes. 1978 saw the start of the annals of international cosmonaut crews on flights in the earth's vicinity in which citizens from several socialist states took part. I have a vivid recollection of the days of the joint space flight of our cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn and his Soviet comrades.

The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the GDR and the Soviet Union of 7 October 1975, about which I shall be writing later, has again enlarged the dimension of cooperation between our two countries in the scientific-technological and economic fields. When I met L.I. Brezhnev in the Crimea in summer 1978 we agreed to work out a long-term programme for specialisation and cooperation between the GDR and the USSR until the year 1990. It was signed in Berlin on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the GDR. With this programme, which will be implemented in conjunction with the long-term programmes of the CMEA, we shall jointly tackle a number of essential economic and scientific-technological projects. Above all it will enable us to interweave yet more the material and intellectual potentials of our two countries for our mutual benefit.

I assume that it is generally known that the CMEA countries seek to solve the overall economic problems of the socialist community by means of their long-term programme. There are such important projects as the solution of problems of raw material, fuel and energy supplies for our countries, the speedy increase of agricultural production, the expansion of the traffic networks and the transport system between the CMEA countries, the joint development of consumer goods and, above all, joint measures for the division of labour in important sectors of the engineering industry and industrial plant production.

While pursuing the progressive integration of our economy with those of the USSR and the other CMEA countries we also take into account the international division of labour and the expansion of our economic ties with capitalist and developing countries. This cooperation serves our own interests as well as those of the non-socialist countries concerned. However, it can only be developed on the basis of complete equality of rights, in keeping with the principles of peaceful coexistence of states with different social structures. It must be free of political strings, all discrimination and attempts at disruption by capitalist states.

Thus socialist economic integration does not in any way inhibit economic, scientific and technological cooperation with capitalist states. On the con-

trary. Our close cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other CMEA countries also enhances our opportunities for trade with the non-socialist part of the world. At the same time it reflects the increased economic potential of our republic.

The experience of recent years in particular shows that the types of cooperation have become more multifarious. Besides conventional exchanges of goods there are compensatory, cooperative and licensing arrangements. This is advantageous for us because it helps to accelerate the progress of socialism. Of course, the other side makes a profit on these transactions. This is in the nature of things. In any case, we are interested in further progress of trade on the basis of mutual advantage.

Today the GDR has an efficient socialist economy with a modern management system and is well equipped to tackle the tasks of present and future. It is committed to efficiency and growth and organised and managed from the point of view of the highest rationalisation. This is for us the criterion which guarantees material security, full employment and prosperity for the present and the future. The starting point for all decisions on science and technology as well as material production is and remains the needs of the population, the requirements of a planned proportionate development of all aspects of social life. This new quality of context between production and consumption, between the standard of work performance and the standard of living is at the centre of the policy of our party and of the socialist state. On 7 October 1974 it was incorporated in the Constitution of the GDR by a resolution of the Volkskammer: "Further improvement of the material and cultural standard of living of the population on the basis of a fast pace of development of socialist production, of scientific and technological progress and growth of labour productivity shall be the decisive task of the advanced socialist society."



Inspecting new production units in the Buna chemical plant,
13 March 1980. Second from right is Günter Mittag.

XXII

Modern management in socialist industry

As I have said already the GDR economy is ■ socialist planned economy. It works on the basis of resolutions of our party, directives by the state and mandatory plan targets. Following the principle of democratic centralism we combine central management and planning of the economy more and more closely with the responsibility of individual enterprises and the initiative and activity of the working people in them and in the local areas, with their comprehensive participation in management and planning. Well over 80 per cent of all working people take part in the annual plan discussion in factories and workers' collectives. This increases their democratic identification with the plan targets and promotes their readiness not just to raise output figures but to increase efficiency and quality.

Incessantly we also perfect the management of the economy, its planning and stimulation according to the latest findings of the science of management. In all this it remains our aim to enable the individual to go about his work in such a way as to make it more fruitful and also more satisfying for himself.

From the beginning we Communists were convinced that we would succeed in breaking the economic and political power of the big monopolies in our country. We were equally sure that the true producer of material

wealth in the economy, the working class, was capable of directing modern large-scale industrial production. Nor did we doubt that in the GDR too the ingenious predictions of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to the effect that the working class is capable of developing all intellectual and material forces of production for the benefit of the people, would be fulfilled.

In my work I meet practically every day outstanding individuals who have come from the ranks of the working people and now hold leading positions in the economy, in combines and factories, in foreign trade organisations and other fields. The vast majority of them started out as young workers or as children of working-class homes. They grew up with the republic, qualified in theory and practice and now bear responsibility for the useful work of tens of thousands of people, for national assets often worth thousands of millions of marks.

Of course, the tasks are not easy. All of them have had and still have to learn a lot—not only from books but from facts and here and there also from a word of necessary criticism. Over the decades managers of the socialist economy, of its various bodies, of the combines and factories, have grown up who fulfil their tasks as Communists with great devotion and high expert abilities. We are proud of them. They are respected not only at home but also beyond the borders of our republic.

It has been proved time and again that as long as there is a clear political line organisation determines success in the end. Modern industrial organisation is nothing alien to the working class. Its strength has always consisted in being organised and disciplined. It is therefore no surprise that it should produce outstanding organisers and managers of the socialist economy.

We needed—and turned out to have—no small degree of self-confidence. Such self-confidence is indispensable in order to master the tasks of management and planning, the organisation of a modern socialist industry. It is founded on the experiences drawn from political struggle and also on the fact that we have at our disposal the most reliable theory in the form of the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. From it we also draw the fundamental insights required to master modern, large-scale industrial production.

Lenin proved that capitalism in its imperialist phase comes very close to all-out socialisation of production. State-monopoly capitalism, he declared, is the complete material preparation for socialism.

Marx analysed comprehensively the organisation of labour in society. He

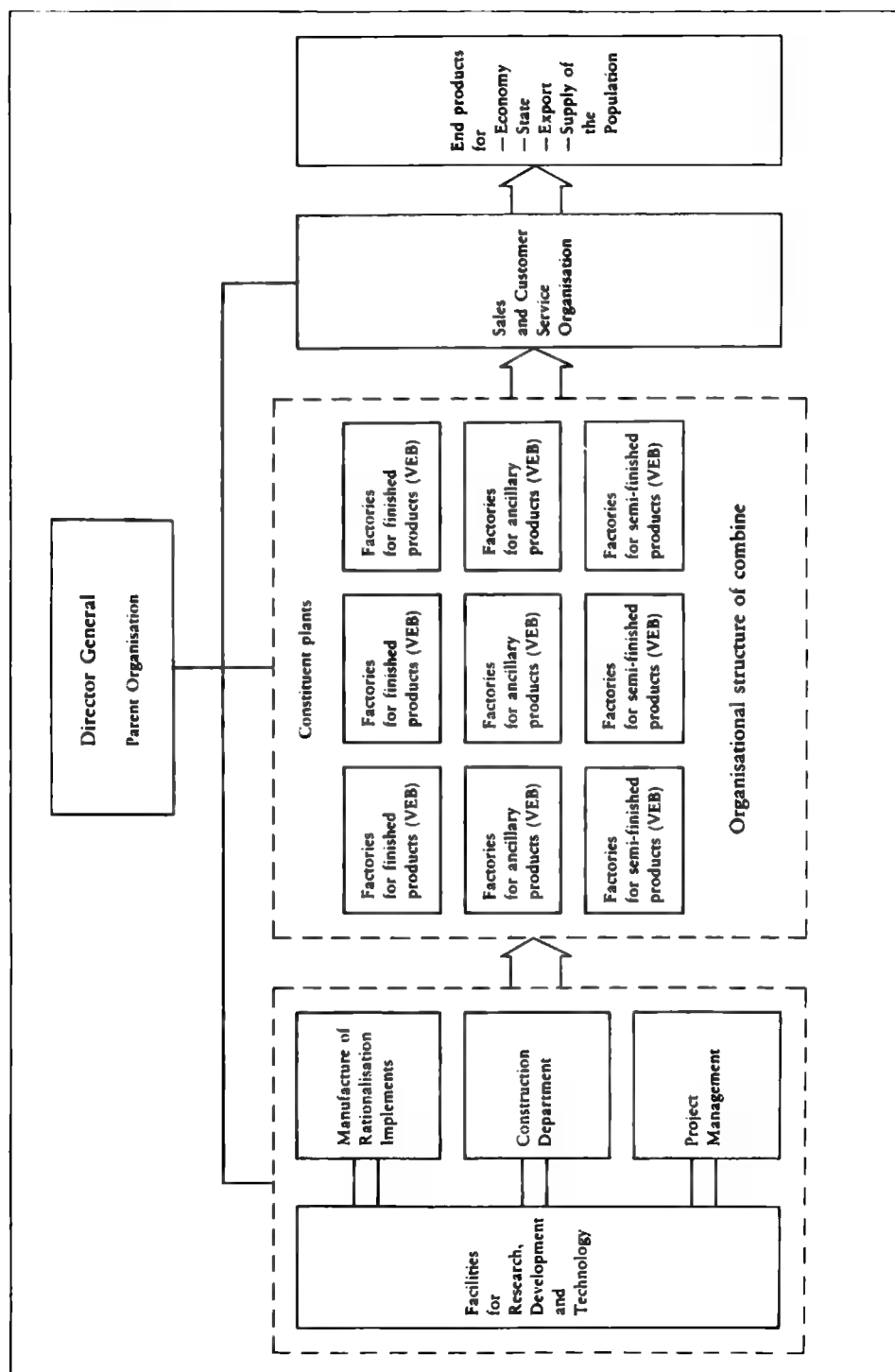
examined the related process of division and combination of labour—cooperation and concentration—very carefully. He showed how by means of methodical application of these findings ■ new productive force develops from the organisation of labour. We make use of this, especially as nothing in our social order prevents us from applying the most suitable variants. Thus the forms of the new grew up in the lap of the old society, and in socialism it matures to a new quality.

Today industrial development in the GDR has grown to such a degree of maturity that it has become necessary to adapt organisation as ■ lever of efficiency to requirements. The combines play a key role in this. In our conditions we consider them to be the modern form of directing socialist industry.

Let us look at an internationally known combine like Carl Zeiss Jena. In this year of 1980 its 42,000 employees will turn out high-quality products in the fields of precision and optical instruments, electronics and scientific instruments worth about 2,400 million marks.

It consists of 15 nationally owned factories most of which employ several thousand people. The combine deals, on its own responsibility, with all those fundamental problems which arise in its pursuit of the task of manufacturing its finished products in accordance with top quality standards and at rising output levels. Therefore the combine has ■ research centre with more than 4,000 employees: highly qualified scientists, mathematicians, physicists, chemists, engineers and technologists. Also affiliated to it is an important factory which produces optical glass—Schott & Genossen of Jena. In addition the combine has a large factory for the production of various kinds of ancillary products, particularly in the field of electronics. It also includes its own well-developed factory for the manufacture of rationalisation implements in order to keep the technological processes on the highest possible level. Further on it has its own export unit. The management of the combine is run in the most modern way and includes the use of computer technology.

Generally speaking the combines incorporate all the capacities of science and technology in project management, supply of ancillary goods, and manufacture of technological equipment. This helps to produce high-quality finished products in a well-organised unified process. The combines therefore carry high economic responsibility. They contribute a lot to the socialist economy and are themselves based on the strength of this highly efficient economic system.



We have always paid special attention to the combination of science and technology in production. This is actually one of the main reasons why we have switched to the formation of combines. It is interesting to note that Lenin used the example of the emergence of the large chemical industry concerns in Germany at the beginning of this century to demonstrate that with the progress of socialisation of production the process of technical innovation and perfection was being socialised. We apply this principle under present-day conditions on a new and higher level because we have to combine the scientific and technological revolution with the advantages of socialism. At present we have 129 combines in the manufacturing and construction industry of the GDR. In them about 2.4 million working people produce industrial goods worth 260,000 million marks. They represent more than 83 per cent of the whole industrial output of our country. The construction industry adds 18,000 million marks worth of production to this figure.

This is obviously a powerful economic force. Among these combines there are such as the petrochemical combine at Schwedt with a production of 18,000 million marks or the Mansfeld Wilhelm Pieck combine with a production of 7,000 million marks. I might also mention the Leuna-Werke "Walter Ulbricht" combine with a production of 6,700 million marks and other combines with a production of more than 6,000 million marks each.

A comparison of the volume of production of these nationally owned combines with that of some of the largest capitalist industrial enterprises—for instance in the FRG—is interesting. In such a comparison the Schwedt petrochemical combine would take 9th place. The other combines mentioned would rank among the top 30. A further 36 combines also have volumes which compare well with those of the largest industrial enterprises in the FRG.

In making this comparison it is not, of course, intended to lump together capitalist monopolies and socialist combines. It is a strictly technical comparison from the point of view of economic efficiency and importance. There is, after all, a "small difference". As expressions of private ownership capitalist concerns are enormous centres of exploitation which fight each other in bitter competition. By contrast the socialist combines of the GDR are all publicly owned and their production serves the people.

We therefore have no reason to hide our satisfaction about our achievements in this field. The Communists have often had to face the accusation that while perhaps they were able to organise political agitation they could

not organise the economy. Well, these accusations are one thing and the facts of our life are something quite different. The purpose of our economic efforts consists in perpetually raising the standard of living of our people. For this purpose we develop the productive forces of the republic in the most effective manner. Our socialist planned economy opens up all possibilities for this. The combines are living social organisms in which large collective forces apply creative initiative to the achievement of the economic plan targets.

In my work I can very often sense the social power which emanates from the combines and their employees, from their researchers, engineers and managers. I often think of many of my comrades in this context, such as the director general of the Leuna-Werke "Walter Ulbricht" combine, Erich Müller, the director general of the petrochemical combine of Schwedt, Werner Frohn, or the director general of the Carl Zeiss Jena combine, Wolfgang Biermann.

The many years of experience with the socialist planned economy confirm that it is capable of meeting with high efficiency all demands made on it by the development of the modern productive forces in socialism. Its potential is by no means exhausted.



Opening the AGRA agricultural exhibition
of the GDR in Leipzig-Markkleeberg, 8 June 1979.
(From r. to l.: Gerhard Grüneberg, Horst Sindermann,
Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, Günther Kleiber, Joachim Herrmann).

XXIII

Results of agricultural policy

To anyone who wants to get to know the achievements of socialist agricultural policy in the GDR I recommend a visit to the annual agricultural exhibition at Leipzig-Markkleeberg. In 1979 the "Agra" captured the spirit of the 30th anniversary of the GDR. It showed impressively and convincingly the changes in rural areas, in the life of the peasants and agricultural workers since the end of the Second World War.

Taking a walk around the "Agra" in 1979 together with comrades from the Politbureau and many agricultural experts I remembered the difficult beginnings we had had in this field too. On my way from Brandenburg-Görden prison to Berlin in late April/early May 1945 I passed through largely destroyed villages, met people without hope for the future and received an impression of the enormous losses in agriculture. The heritage of Nazi rule and war was catastrophic in the countryside as well.

It had not been enough for Nazi agricultural policy to destroy the livelihood of innumerable smallholders and tenant farmers and to drive many medium-size farmers to the brink of ruin. More than ■ million villagers had had to pay with their lives for the Nazi lie about "living space in the East". On the territory of the GDR the war had by 1945 reduced the area under cultivation by 18 per cent as compared to prewar times. It would take years

before most of this area could be used again for cultivation. The number of agricultural machines was reduced by 30 per cent. At the end of the war only a few farms still had tractors or draught animals. Herds had been diminished. Without sufficient seed corn, without tractors, draught animals, agricultural machines and above all without male labour—most farmers and agricultural workers were still prisoners of war—the women in agriculture did not know how they were going to get the spring sowing done or to bring in the next harvest.

At that time securing food supplies was a matter of survival for our people. In the long run we could achieve this only by fundamental social changes in the rural areas. We based ourselves on the KPD's agricultural policy about which I have written already, in particular on the demands contained in the appeal "Face the village" of 14 February 1926, in the outline programme for the national and social liberation of the German people of 24 August 1930 and in the Aid-for-the-Farmers programme of 16 May 1931.

In spring 1945 we Communists set to work, together with the workers, peasants and farm labourers, to create antifascist democratic conditions in the rural areas as well. This was possible only on condition that there too the economic power and the political influence of the big business interests, *Junkers* and big estate owners would be broken for ever. Against stiff resistance from reactionary forces we pushed the democratic land reform through in autumn 1945. The local democratic land reform commissions, which had been elected at farmers' meetings, did great work in seeing it through. They had over 50,000 members. They were industrial workers, peasants with only very little land, small tenant farmers, agricultural workers and evacuees—mostly German peasants from territories in eastern and southeastern Europe who had lost their homes as a result of the fascist policy of annexation. More than 12,000 Communists were members of these commissions, more than 9,000 Social Democrats and just under 1,000 members of the bourgeois-democratic parties. Well over half of the members did not belong to any party.

All of the land that had belonged to the 7,000 big estate owners who had over 100 hectares, active Nazis, war criminals, monopolies and banks, was expropriated without compensation. All other privately owned land, all the real estate owned by the Churches and religious communities were left untouched by the land reform.

The big estate owners and their political agents tried by all means—rang-

ing from legal tricks via demagogic slogans and a furious campaign of defamation to acts of subversion and terror—to prevent or sabotage the land reform. All these attempts failed, however, thanks to the resoluteness of the workers and peasants. Altogether 3.3 million hectares were put into the democratic land reform fund. Of these 2.2 million hectares were given—free of mortgages, as individual, inheritable but unsalable and unseizable and indivisible property—to more than 200,000 agricultural workers and evacuees and about 125,000 peasants who had very little land and small tenant farmers, industrial workers and others. Altogether more than 550,000 recipients of land made only a single payment which in many cases did not even cover the cost of the official land survey. About 1 million hectares remained in public ownership. On this land state farms (VEG), experimental farms and forestries were established.

The democratic land reform turned out to be the first victorious joint revolutionary mass action of workers and peasants, an important socio-economic foundation for their alliance. The committees for mutual aid, organised by working farmers, were created at that time. In the course of the land reform they developed into a democratic mass organisation of the working farmers, the Association for Mutual Peasants' Aid. The publicly owned machine-hiring stations founded in 1948 (MAS) made it possible for farmers to use tractors and other agricultural machines and equipment for small fees which were subsidised by the state. We had also started out on the realisation of a comprehensive construction programme for new farmers as I have mentioned already in connection with the activities of the youth federation during those years.

During the five years from 1945 to 1950 most of the peasant farms were strengthened in this manner. They influenced the political life in the villages more and more distinctly. Prewar yields and a corresponding cattle population were largely reestablished by the early fifties. It was obvious that prewar levels and the foreseeable development of the productive forces, in particular the progress made in science and technology in the rural areas, called for new social conditions there as well.

After having founded working communities for sowing, harvesting and threshing as early as 1950/51, the farmers in some villages started in spring 1952 to combine their land and other means of production on a voluntary basis in agricultural production cooperatives (LPG). In many places preparatory committees for the transition to cooperative agricultural production sprang up. These farmers turned to the SED Central Committee and

to the government of the GDR asking for assistance in the organisation of the LPGs and support during the transition to socialist cooperative large-scale production.

Thus we arrived at the resolution of the SED's second party conference of 9 to 12 July 1952 to create the foundations for socialism in agriculture as well. We welcomed the farmers' initiative and assured them of our full support on their doubtlessly difficult path to socialist forms of work and life.

We deliberated all essential questions of cooperative development in agriculture in conferences with the heads and activists of the cooperative movement in the countryside during those years and later at national farmers' congresses. Positive experiences were vented, conclusions drawn and future tasks discussed on these occasions. In order to include the cooperative farmers in the management and planning of agriculture LPG advisory boards were established on the regional and national level following a resolution by the SED Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the GDR. We took great care to advance the socialist development in the rural areas step by step, to create the material preconditions for it and under all circumstances to take fully into account the understanding and willingness of the farmers. This purpose was served by founding committees consisting of farmers and agricultural workers who prepared the formation of LPGs. At many thousands of meetings, forums and discussions with small and medium-size farmers, members of the ZK, regional committees of the SED, local government officials, and members of other democratic parties and mass organisations, had constructive exchanges of opinion about the agricultural policy of our party and the formation of LPGs.

In conformity with the conditions in the GDR we used several types of such agricultural cooperatives. In accordance with the statutes for LPGs, first adopted in 1952 and several times updated, LPGs of types I and II produced only crops, while LPGs of type III produced crops and bred animals. The internal organisation of LPGs was determined by the principles of cooperative democracy. In all types of LPGs the farmers remained owners of the land, and this has not been changed to this day.

The working class and the socialist state gave comprehensive assistance to the young cooperatives. More than 31,000 industrial workers had gone to the countryside by the end of 1955 in order to support the socialist reformation with their political and economic experience. After 1961, when the LPGs had become politically and economically stabilised, state-owned

modern machinery was handed over to the LPGs or the LPGs bought it at a very low price. By means of this price policy, by granting favourable credit terms and many other types of assistance we stimulated cooperative work.

While this process was taking place there were fierce arguments with reactionary forces who brought political and ideological pressure to bear, to say nothing of making many attempts to sabotage agricultural production. Neither arson nor incitement by the mass media in the neighbouring capitalist countries could prevent the farmers from joining the LPGs. New LPGs were founded. From year to year their share in the total surface under cultivation, in cattle population and total production increased. Their social and economic potential grew.

By spring 1960 all farmers had joined the LPGs. This was—as the farmers themselves said—the socialist spring in the countryside. Between summer 1952 and May 1960 nearly a million farmers had joined more than 19,000 LPGs. During the same period about 500 state farms and other state-owned or cooperative establishments were set up. Taken together these now formed a stable foundation for the GDR's socialist agriculture.

During just eight years of the greatest revolutionary transformation in the history of the German farmers millions of people found a new way of life. This involved a complicated process of rethinking from a status of private ownership to socialist forms of work and life in the course of which not only were boundary markers removed from the fields but attitudes and habits which had been prevalent for centuries were also overcome. It is astonishing in how short a time our farmers adopted the new conditions of production and understood the working conditions and advantages of cooperative production. In this way the class of cooperative farmers evolved. Side by side with the working class they began to shape a new life in the rural areas.

Thus we realised the Lenin cooperative plan—the concentrated expression of the teachings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin about the revolutionary solution of the agricultural and peasant question—according to the conditions prevailing in the GDR. This led “to new conditions on a road as simple, easy and accessible to the peasants as possible” (Lenin). While perpetually strengthening its alliance with the peasantry the working class ascertained its leading role in this process. Principles like the all-out support for cooperative development and the close connection between economic, cultural and social progress were constructively applied.

The majority of LPGs were quickly consolidated. Sound cooperative work came to prevail. Scientific knowledge and new technology were adopted in agriculture. Active democratic life developed in the LPGs. Cooperative farmers started many initiatives in order to apply advanced methods of production, to concentrate the use of all the resources at their disposal and to improve the productive structures of their operations. With this in mind the farmers started in the mid-sixties to establish close cooperative connections between LPGs and between LPGs and the VEGs and other socialist agricultural enterprises. On this basis the LPGs and the VEGs used their machines jointly, bought modern means of production jointly and formed joint operations in many fields of production. More modern methods were introduced into crop and livestock production in this manner with the assistance of our party and our socialist state. The transition to industrial-type production ensued. Thus a new phase in the progress towards modern socialist agriculture was inaugurated.

We at the Central Committee and the Politbureau drew our conclusions from these objective requirements in good time. They were taken into account in the formulation of the central policy which was decided at the 8th and confirmed at the 9th Party Congress of the SED. In order to give further expression to the advanced socialist society in the GDR, and to maintain and systematically raise the material and cultural living standards of our people, great efforts in agriculture were required.

It made a big impression on me and other members of the party leadership, who attended the 10th and 11th Farmers' Congresses at Leipzig in 1968 and 1972 respectively, with what sense of responsibility and expertise the cooperative farmers, male and female, who had been democratically elected at members' meetings and district conferences, discussed with party and state officials the questions of how to increase production, improve working and living conditions, and promote social development in the rural areas. The activity of the district councils for agriculture and food processing leads to the involvement of members of the LPGs in the regional management and planning of agriculture and enhances socialist democracy.

One of the most important prerequisites of success is the close alliance between the working class and the cooperative farmers. Since the liberation of our people from Nazism this alliance has developed into the unshakable foundation of socialism in our country. The cooperative farmers, who maintain close ties with our party and with the socialist state, contribute actively to the implementation of our central policy. Their high level of

education—more than 87 per cent of all those employed in agriculture have completed an apprenticeship and become skilled workers, foremen or engineers while in 1960 that figure was only about 10 per cent—documents significant achievements as well as sure guarantees that growing demands will be met at all times.

Even though the number of people employed in agriculture has dropped to about one third, those employed in rural areas multiplied output during the 30 years' existence of the GDR. They produced double the volume of crops, sold nine and a half times the number of fat stock and five and a half times as much milk to the state. The production of eggs even rose 21-fold. On account of this we have since 1973 been able to supply our people's increasing per capita consumption of basic foodstuffs largely from our own production. With an annual consumption of 87 kg of meat and meat products, about 15 kg of butter and almost 97 kg of vegetables per capita in the GDR, babies and old people included, we stand well to the fore internationally.

I remember well a discussion with cooperative farmers and agricultural workers from Dorf Mecklenburg/Gross Stieten on 12 July 1972. On that occasion I was visiting a new pig breeding installation. At the entrance gate of the installation which consisted of many long aluminium-covered sties I was greeted by the director of the VEG Gross Stieten, Erich Tack. He reported that the modern agricultural operation had been built up in just three years. Since then it had developed intensive large-scale production with industrialtype methods while at the same time engaging in specialisation with its cooperative partners.

In passing he mentioned that he had once been coachman to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg. After the liberation he had been a worker, then a trade union activist and since 1951 director of the VEG Gross Stieten. I congratulated him on his career which is typical of many agricultural workers and farmers in our state. It exemplifies the changes which socialism has brought about in the life of each one of them and in the life of the whole rural population.

In order to safeguard the conditions for increasing production and efficiency we have concentrated and specialised our agriculture since the early seventies. Specialised LPGs and VEGs are and for the time being remain its core, 1,400 of them being devoted to crops and about 3,500 to cattle. With the degree of concentration, accumulative power and scientific-technological potential which has now been achieved, they have all the prerequisites to

increase production and to perfect the socio-economic ties among themselves.

Far-reaching social advantages are not least among the foundations on which the future tasks will be accomplished. Work on the land was freed from exploitation and made considerably easier. A high level of education, unimpeded access to the latest accomplishments of science, technology and culture, broad democratic participation in matters of agricultural and state management, material security and safety, are characteristic of rural life nowadays. Between 1970 and 1980 VEGs, agricultural and horticultural production cooperatives created on their own new and improved homes for more than 400,000 rural residents. In the rural areas there are by now 700 to 800 places in day nurseries per 1,000 children; the demand for places in kindergartens is met in full. In this way we promote the participation of women in social and working life. From the early seventies on social and old age insurance of the members of cooperatives has been the same as for the industrial workers of our country. Finally, the increased efficiency of LPGs and VEGs also contributes to the embellishment of the villages, the improvement of public services and other communal projects. These are important matters of overall social concern because about a quarter of the citizens of our country live in villages and rural settlements.

We consider the present and future development of socialist agriculture as a matter which concerns all sections of society, a task for the economy as a whole. Our long-term targets focus on the systematic increase of production and its efficiency in agriculture and the food industry. Its purpose is a steady, continually improving supply of the population with high-quality foodstuffs and the supply of industry with raw materials. Simultaneously we want to bring living standards in the villages still closer into line with those in the towns. In this we intend to overcome the essential differences between urban and rural life.

In the GDR we have a surface of 0.37 hectares per inhabitant under cultivation. We therefore have no alternative but to use every square metre of land intensively and to increase its productive capacity perpetually with the help of science and technology. We shall have to overcome step by step the severity of working conditions which in part still prevails in crop and livestock farming.

In order to increase national income we are endeavouring to develop labour productivity and efficiency at a fast pace. The most important point in this respect is the increase in yield per hectare and in the efficiency of

livestock production. The comprehensive socialist intensification of crop and livestock production is a long-term target which we are resolutely pursuing. Its main features are comprehensive mechanisation and use of chemicals, soil enrichment, artificial drying methods, breeding and plant cultivation. All this requires still higher qualification of cooperative farmers and agricultural workers.

Thus in agriculture too mastering science and technology and improving the economic and social efficiency of scientific and technological progress have become the key factor to which all our social energies are directed. After all, further increase in material production and greater efficiency will determine the scope of our social policy.

Meanwhile significant qualitative social developments in the rural areas are becoming increasingly evident. They are concentrated on the gradual transition to industrial methods in crop and livestock production. These are obviously complicated long-term processes. We must and shall learn to master ever better the close interrelations between economic and biological laws which are typical of agricultural production in order to change traditional ways and means for the greatest benefit to society.

Here again we see that what fills bourgeois society today with pessimism, what prompts it to invent absurd theories about an alleged autonomous effect of science and technology in order to cover up the social degradation of the peasant masses, is something we tackle with optimism and confidence in the future. Socialist conditions of production offer all the necessary prerequisites.

Cooperation proves to be the basic element in the shaping of socialist agricultural large-scale production. It is increasingly permeating the whole agricultural process. It encompasses relationships between individual enterprises just as it does the interaction between various branches of the national economy. The target is to produce in the most effective manner finished products for the economy in the form of foodstuffs ready for consumption.

In our agricultural policy we attach great importance to the all-round application of the "golden fund" of experiences in cooperation. The task is to translate the concentration and specialisation into high growth rates in production and efficiency and to enhance socialist democracy still further. I should like to point out in this context that important social processes are taking shape as cooperation proceeds. Cooperative farmers and workers are working together more and more closely in joint production processes;

manpower and resources are put to work in concentrated fashion, while education and further training schemes are jointly implemented. Reaching out beyond production the collective bodies tackle projects which are changing the face of the villages and rural communities. This working together is democratically directed and organised by cooperation councils which are made up of representatives of all LPGs and other organisations concerned. The committees they form guarantee that many thousands of male and female cooperative farmers participate in the direction and planning of economic and social development.

We take these developments into account by applying new statutes for LPGs for crop and livestock production which were worked out following a resolution by the SED's 9th Party Congress and adopted after broad democratic deliberation. Socialist state bodies and public organisations assist in making these statutes a reality. Many cooperative farmers of both sexes join in this work as elected representatives of the people from the Volkskammer down to local assemblies. At the same time various democratic bodies of the socialist agricultural enterprises and their cooperative institutions take advantage of the capabilities and talents of thousands of other agricultural employees in their administrative and planning activities. This close combination of social, economic and personal interests proves extremely useful.

We take it for granted that there is an increasingly close interrelationship between economic and social progress. We therefore pay special attention to the direction and planning of social processes in agriculture as well. Home improvements occupy a central place in this. We are interested in making sure that the facts of rural life and the local ties of the village population are given proper attention. We also endeavour to upgrade vocational training in rural areas and to improve means of transport, trade establishments, medical care and the facilities for cultural and sporting activity.

Government measures are closely linked to the tasks laid down in the statutes of the LPGs in the field of social policy. These include obligations for the cooperatives to promote home building by LPG members and other village dwellers as well as many other measures ranging from maternal and child care to services for old age pensioners. In short, serving the well-being of the working people in agriculture and making their work lighter and their lives fuller and richer, is what all our social policy is about — in the rural areas just as elsewhere.



Receiving material documenting advances in research from Prof. Hermann Klare,
President of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic,
25 May 1972. Seen on the right is Kurt Hager.

XXIV

Wanted: inventors and innovators

In a modern socialist industrial country economic growth is essentially determined by what researchers, inventors and innovators, scientists, engineers and technicians accomplish. In the GDR we have created favourable conditions for the sort of production which represents a considerable measure of scientific and technological knowledge and experience. The working people in our country have a high standard of education. They are thoroughly familiar with modern socialist large-scale production. We take care to see to it that an increasing part of the increase in production arises from high value products and that highly productive technology is used. In addition we insist on the most economical use of available energy and materials. In the specific circumstances of our economy with its limited labour resources and in view of the present worldwide scarcity and high prices of raw materials and fuel this is of great importance. At present we consider it the most urgent task to step up the pace of scientific and technological progress. Consequently all demands made on the qualitative renewal of production and on its comprehensive socialist rationalisation require greater efforts in scientific research and technical development.

The systematic promotion of science and technology is of greater significance now than ever before. For us this is the crucial premise for the increase

in labour productivity, for the improvement of product quality and for the achievement of the most favourable ratio between input and output.

It has been proved how right we were at the 8th Party Congress in determining clearly the place of scientific and technological progress in our national life. In the Central Committee's report on its activities to the 8th Party Congress I spoke about the high expectations we placed on the contribution by science and technology to the accomplishment of social tasks. It was therefore necessary to overcome certain exaggerated ideas about the real possibilities of individual scientific disciplines which had arisen in the second half of the sixties, and that not only in the GDR. In 1970/71 we concentrated on determining the tasks of science and technology in an objective, sober and realistic fashion, free of wishful thinking and exclusively with the needs of the workers and all other working people in mind.

The 8th Party Congress more than ever focused the party's policy on the main concern of socialism, i. e. the rise in material and cultural living standards for the people and the creation of the conditions for the achievement of this goal. In this way the SED resolutely devoted itself to caring for the interests and needs of the working people. Only with this approach was it possible for us to assess correctly the fundamental problems of the future development of the sciences in our country and to draw the right conclusions. In every progressive phase of the revolutionary process the unity of science and politics requires the constantly improved assimilation of the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin—which are their intellectual foundation—and at the same time due attention to everything new that arises in the development of society. This line of thinking played a special part in my already mentioned essay "Questions of Science and Politics in Socialist Society".

Very soon after the SED's 8th Party Congress it became clear that in more and more factories scientific and technological progress was not just being proclaimed but accelerated in practice with steadily increasing economic results. A growing number of managers were understanding how to arouse and promote a passionate interest in scientific and technological innovation and in attaining top performances. Through cooperation by workers, engineers and scientists new progress was being achieved.

This spirit also dominated the meeting I had with the presidium of the Academy of Sciences in May 1972. In an open and creative atmosphere the members of this body reported on the concrete aims of the Academy for the all-round strengthening of socialism in the GDR. They declared that the

Academy of Sciences considered it its main responsibility to conduct successful long-term basic research in collaboration with scientists from universities, colleges and research and development establishments in the national economy. The intended course of research was to help in achieving the effective realisation of the targets of our socialist development. The members of the Academy's presidium felt committed to the continual intensification of international cooperation in research with the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries and to contributing substantially to scientific integration within the socialist community of states.

I assured those present that the SED Central Committee had high respect for the achievements of scientists and the Academy of Sciences of the GDR. We thoroughly discussed the problems, possibilities and options for the further expansion of the Academy, the still closer ties to be established between science and production, and the contribution of the sciences to the general intellectual and cultural development in our country.

The members of the presidium submitted their problems to me, with suggestions as to how research should be materially and technically safeguarded, and we exchanged thoughts on the central problem of how to translate scientific knowledge into practical application as fast as possible. We were agreed that basic research had to look far into the future, particularly in a socialist country. Its main directions had to be valid for a long period of time. This presupposed a thorough understanding of long-term social needs and the type of research work which with circumspection and considerable energy translates research results immediately into practical usefulness. It was acknowledged by all that such translation of scientific results had to be conducted in a realistic and flexible manner.

The purpose of the exchange of views with the presidium of the Academy of Sciences was to deal with basic questions of our party's science policy. These are of great importance for all scientific institutions in the GDR and for the further strengthening of the unity of politics and sciences in our country. This encounter left no doubt that in the GDR the sciences had every opportunity to create still better conditions for social progress.

If the goal we set then was to combine science and production more effectively and in the process to use all the advantages of socialism, today, at the beginning of a new decade, that goal is more relevant than ever. In the GDR we have to face the necessity of increasing production almost exclusively by means of increased labour productivity, as in the long run the size of the labour force will shrink further and the number of man hours

available will become smaller. Not the least of the reasons for this is to be found in such social policy measures as the shortening of working hours, longer holidays and other factors. At the same time we need more labour for additional tasks in such fields as services, education and culture.

We cannot ignore either that bottlenecks and the natural limitations of our energy, materials and natural resources can be overcome only with a higher input of efforts and funds or that they must be met by modern technology. The socialist economy aims at the rational use of nature's treasures as a source of social wealth. We want to achieve the necessary increase in production with the help of science and technology at a decreasing rate of specific energy and materials consumption.

Finally, the increasing needs of our country and the complicated conditions on foreign markets demand more and more new products of high quality, reliability and attractive design. At issue are quality products which make more efficient use of scarce and expensive raw materials.

Accordingly we concentrate on opening up all possibilities for the development and expansion of the natural, technological and social sciences. We do everything to assist the creative activity of researchers, inventors, technologists and innovators, to lead them to new scientific and technological insights and to guarantee these latter's fast and comprehensive translation into practical application, specifically into production.

Not one meeting of our party's Central Committee passes without discussions of and resolutions on fundamental questions of scientific and technological progress. I and the other comrades in the party and state leadership have a great desire to discuss tasks, projects, results and problems at work which are brought before us with researchers and engineers.

I can say with every justification that never before in the history of our people was the social rank of and the appreciation for scientists and technologists, researchers and engineers, their participation in decision-making and the exercise of power ■■ pronounced as it is in our state.

I should like to emphasise that our attitude to science and its application is not exclusively determined by economic considerations. Rather it arises out of the basic features of our view of the world, from its humanist spirit. The birth of Marxism, of scientific communism, was at the same time the beginning of a persistent struggle to master the laws of nature and society in the interests of the working class and of all working people, both theoretically and practically. As experience shows in our country ■■ well, social development is a deeply scientific revolutionary process.

It is well known that the founders of our movement, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V. I. Lenin were revolutionaries, politicians and scholars at the same time. They always emphasised the humanist and revolutionary nature of science. They considered that the working class was interested in the progress of science and its productive application. We consider technological innovation on the basis of new scientific knowledge an important tool for the development of the productive forces and of society. Marx called science a productive force. He was overjoyed when an invention "immediately revolutionised industry and historical development altogether", as Engels put it.

And it was Engels who in 1893 in his letter to the International Congress of Socialist Students declared that bourgeois revolutions had called on the universities to supply jurists first and foremost as the best raw material for politicians. But the revolution of the working class required doctors, engineers, chemists, agronomists and other specialists. "Because what is important," Engels wrote, "is to take over not only the political apparatus but equally the whole of society's production, and here sound knowledge is needed rather than high-sounding phrases." With equal perspicacity Lenin recognised during the early years of Soviet power the alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia as that great force which would lead the country to a cultural efflorescence.

We in the GDR have also turned this scientific foresight into reality through the policy of the SED. The rise of our country as a developed industrial state could not be explained without that historically new alliance between the working class and the scientists, technologists and engineers. I count it among the outstanding achievements of our party that this alliance has been so successful.

Since the liberation in May 1945 we have striven with all our might to overcome the deep chasm which in imperialist Germany had separated the working people from the intelligentsia. Much patience, tact and effort were required to understand and take into account the very different and often contradictory interests of the mainly bourgeois intelligentsia. My party did everything in the extremely difficult situation immediately after the war to bring about the material conditions necessary for the scientists to go about their creative work. This was possible only with the greatest efforts by the working class, their understanding and willingness to make sacrifices.

I remember vividly the many intellectual discourses with members of the bourgeois intelligentsia. It was a complicated and not infrequently painful

process for them. Many venerated traditions, opinions and prejudices had to be thrown overboard. Reactionary thinking, "greater German" arrogance, anti-communism and anti-Sovietism had done great damage among the intelligentsia too.

The reopening of universities and colleges as well as that of the Academy of Sciences had to be coupled with new thinking. The frank and matter-of-fact exchange of opinions on this subject was beneficial for all of us and brought scientists and our party closer together step by step. It helped to create a new relationship between science and the working people.

Meanwhile the enemies of social progress hoped to make use of the many ties which had developed between monopoly capitalism and the intelligentsia in past decades against socialism. They were by no means satisfied with just luring away specialists from the GDR. They were rather interested in having more than a few scientists and experts, who for various reasons still felt loyalty to their former capitalist employers, stay at their jobs in the nationally owned factories and scientific institutes of our country. Only when important research and development projects were about to be completed were they induced by bribery and blackmail to go to the FRG illegally. Thus the monopolies inflicted damage on our economy in many ways. They stole our intellectual property which had been created at the expense of the people of the GDR. At the same time they prevented these research results from being used for the benefit of our industry and agriculture, luring highly qualified specialists away and sowing mistrust between the working class and the intelligentsia. But even these attempts to force us to our knees failed.

Thousands of workers, engineers and scientists joined together in creative and efficient collaboration for the achievement of high-priority economic targets. The alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia proved to be an elementary need, an absolute necessity. In addition we broke the bourgeois monopoly in education and removed those barriers which had prevented the majority of working people from assimilating for themselves the findings of science and technology and contributing to the latter's development as inventors and innovators.

One may truly call it a great success for the policy of our party that in the past decades the majority of the intelligentsia has come primarily from the working class and the class of cooperative farmers. Through social origin and practical work it has close ties with the workers, the cooperative farmers and the other working people. We have thus overcome the chasm between

working people and an intelligentsia dependent on and beholden to the class of exploiters, which is typical of capitalism. In its place we have a relationship of creative collaboration, friendship and togetherness.

What generations of humanist German scholars, among them such eminent German researchers as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt and Albert Einstein worked for, what they spoke out for and for what not a few of them even risked their lives, has become a reality in our country. Science serves and benefits all the people. Where the working class rules the wealth of scientific knowledge is for the first time in history used for the benefit of the working people. The principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work" makes it possible to match social requirements to the interests of the collectivity and of each working person. For this reason the specific motive powers of socialism can become effective in the development of science and technology in our country. The results of scientific research, technological innovations as well as economic growth serve the material security of our citizens and the improvement of their material and cultural living standards. In future, too, we shall spare no effort to make this element of our social order more and more evident and effective.

High performance in the natural and social sciences as well as in technology are a fundamental need of our society. I am particularly glad that this conviction is firmly rooted in the whole party and in the consciousness of our people. Hardly a day passes without my receiving information and letters from workers' collectives reporting on the great initiative shown by scientists, engineers, designers, project managers and technologists in their efforts to attain high results. They describe how these efforts are supplemented and supported, indeed often accelerated, by the creativity of experienced workers and the vigour of the young. It is a typical picture of our life: To this need of our time broad masses of our people devote their strength and their enthusiasm, and they are fortified in their conviction by the many ways in which experience has taught them that inventiveness and innovation serve them personally as well as the interests of their socialist fatherland.

We follow scientific and technological development throughout the world carefully and contribute to it. Special attention is given to the development and application of new technologies which in large sectors of the economy crucially influence the increase in efficiency. These are technologies which in the long run guarantee a fast pace in the development of productivity and at the same time serve the optimum utilisation of available raw and

other materials as well as the attainment of high quality in manufactured products.

We trust in the strength and the ability of our workers, scientists, technologists and engineers, as well as of the leaders of the state and the economy, to invent, master and make economic use of such modern technologies. We create the most favourable conditions for this. We prepared ourselves in good time for the tasks before us. With the higher contribution of science and technology to the increase in our economy's performance we create further essential preconditions for the realisation of our social policy programme and for the fashioning of an advanced socialist society in the GDR.

Our close cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other CMEA countries in all fields of science and technology has proved a sure foundation for accelerated scientific and technological progress in our country. In March 1977 the then president of the GDR's Academy of Sciences, Prof. Hermann Klare, informed me on a consultation between the presidents of the socialist countries' academies of sciences in Moscow. They had worked out important agreements on the intensification of collaboration in research in the field of scientific instrument manufacture and in other areas. On that occasion the presidents of the academies of sciences of the socialist countries met the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, L. I. Brezhnev. This underlines the great importance which our countries attach to science and the integration of scientific research. The fast development of scientific and technological progress and the increasing complexity of the tasks that have to be tackled make this integration objectively necessary.

It is becoming more and more obvious that science plays an eminent role in the multifaceted process of convergence of the socialist states. It is an expression of the policy of our party that scientists from our country have won for themselves an honoured place in the community of these states.

Our party and our state have always endeavoured to combine our own efforts with the advantages of international division of labour and co-operation. I first came into contact with scientific and technological co-operation as chairman of the FDJ immediately after the foundation of the GDR, when students were being selected and delegated to universities and colleges in the Soviet Union. The unselfish help of the USSR in the training of highly qualified specialists for our republic laid the foundation stone for the establishment of modern research institutions in the GDR—e. g. those

for nuclear research and semiconductor technology—and our participation in the exploration and utilisation of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Since the conclusion of the first government-level agreement between the GDR and the USSR on scientific and technological cooperation in 1951 the Soviet Union has contributed substantially to the establishment of important factories and branches of industry in our country. Among them are the Ost iron foundry complex, the petrochemical industry and not least our nuclear power stations.

If nowadays the GDR has reached a notable scientific and technological level in production, it is largely owing to this cooperation. As regards the features of this cooperation, what stands out is its genuinely democratic character which excludes any form of exploitation or dependence. During the last decade we have proceeded with our partners in the Soviet Union and the other CMEA countries to solve new scientific and technological problems of substantial economic importance jointly. For this purpose we have signed a number of agreements and contracts. From the collaboration of GDR and USSR scientists and technologists resulted for instance the world's first 30-tonne plasma primary melting oven for the production of high quality steels.

Like every citizen of the GDR I am especially proud that the first German in space, our cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn, is a citizen of the GDR. This shows clearly that collaboration within the community of socialist states, above all the access to the advanced results of Soviet science, has given us successes which we on our own could hardly have achieved. Obviously substantial contributions on our part are required as well.

I agree with my friend Leonid Brezhnev that the future demands of socio-economic progress will lead to yet closer cooperation between our countries in the fields of science, technology and production. This is also an aspect which led us to prepare and sign the programme for specialisation and cooperation between the GDR and the USSR until 1990, which has already been mentioned.

Since the worldwide diplomatic recognition of the GDR the economic, scientific and technological ties with capitalist industrial countries have been expanded too. In accordance with the Helsinki agreement we have taken various steps in recent years to develop economic, scientific and technological collaboration for mutual benefit. They are developing in a promising way on the basis of long-term interstate agreements and agreements with individual firms. It fills me with satisfaction to hear on various occasions—not

least during my visits to the Leipzig Fair—that our republic is valued as a reliable partner. We continue to aim at effective ways of collaboration with full equality of rights and for mutual benefit.

Our relations with developing countries are going particularly well. I have been deeply impressed by what I saw during my trips to a number of countries in Africa and the Near East as well as to India and South East Asia. I found confirmation on the spot of how important a role the economic, scientific and technological ties between our countries are playing.

Leading personalities of the host countries described them as effective help in their socio-economic progress and their struggle for national independence. The GDR has established such ties with many developing countries in recent years and is expanding them systematically.

It is typical of the leading role of our party and our state that all demands made on science and technology are accompanied by substantial supportive measures. We consider this support as one of the most important tasks of our society. This shows up clearly in the financial allocations made to scientific and technological work. From the foundation of the GDR in 1949 until 1970 about 30,000 million marks were spent on research and development. The following figures show to what extent expenditure for science and technology has been increased since the 8th Party Congress: During the five-year plan period from 1971 to 1975 25,000 million marks were thus spent. In the present five-year plan from 1976 to 1980 this expenditure will amount to 35,000 million marks. In other words, during the last five years research and development have received more funds than during the 20 years from 1950 to 1970. We were able to make this decision at the 9th Party Congress because during the preceding period we had succeeded in increasing the efficiency of science and technology substantially. This is true both for the advance in knowledge and the translation, application and utilisation of its results in production.

At present more than 170,000 people work in research and development in the GDR. When this is seen in relation to the size of our country, the size of its population and its national income we occupy a leading position among the developed industrial countries.

We employ all our resources in such a way as to take ever more advantage of the possibilities provided by scientific and technological progress. Nowadays we have an extensive network of scientific and technological institutions which is being expanded further.

Advanced research is undertaken in all fields by the scientific institutions

of the GDR. Of this potential 50 per cent is concentrated in universities, academies and colleges. The Academy of Sciences, whose predecessor until 1945 had little more than its 76 members to rely on, has been transformed into an efficient scientific centre for our country. At present nearly 10 per cent of the GDR's research capacity in such important fields as mathematics, cybernetics, data processing, physics (including materials and nuclear research), chemistry, geology, space science, molecular biology and medicine as well as social sciences, is located there.

We have always been convinced that basic research is of exceptional importance. Its task is to lay the foundation for future industrial developments and to prepare the material, intellectual and cultural life of future generations. In searching for fundamentally new insights and hitherto unknown objective laws in nature and society, it gives decisive impulses to scientific and technological progress and produces new scientific methods, thus influencing intellectual life as a whole.

The standards achieved in the development of the productive forces and the relations of production in our republic as well as the all-round close collaboration with the USSR and the other socialist countries make it objectively possible and necessary to raise considerably the level of demands to be made on our scientists as regards basic research.

About two thirds of the people employed in research and development work in scientific research institutions. They are active primarily in those fields of production which are of decisive importance for the acceleration of scientific and technological progress, for scientific penetration of all social life and for increasing efficiency of labour in society generally. This applies to electrical engineering, electronics, the chemical industry, precision engineering, the optical industry, mechanical engineering and the automotive industry.

As mentioned, every combine in the GDR has its own facilities for research and technological development. Important research centres in the economy have achieved international recognition. Among them are the research centres of the machine-tool industry and VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, the Central Institute for Welding Technology and the Institute for Rail Vehicles. These establishments collaborate in many ways with the Academy, the universities and colleges. This increasingly helps to bring about such scientific and technological achievements as will substantially raise the quality of our products and strengthen their international reputation. We place great emphasis on this development.

Of course, we are particularly interested in the training of students and in the placement of graduates from our universities and colleges. Their knowledge and abilities, their practical skills and their urge for new insights are important factors for the acceleration of scientific and technological progress. Every year thousands of them graduate. In 1978 alone 29,000 citizens of our state completed university and college courses, while more than 41,000 graduated from technical training colleges. We are increasing our efforts in this field incessantly. Nowadays we have in our economy more than 470,000 university and college graduates and more than 850,000 graduates of technical training colleges. In proportion to the total number of inhabitants of our country we hold a respectable place among developed industrial nations. It is one of our main concerns to give these scientifically educated people high responsibilities. They must be enabled to use all their knowledge and ability, their creative ideas and their potential, for the benefit of our country in the form of inventions and innovations.

In October 1978 the Technical University of Dresden, an internationally renowned centre of scientific and intellectual life, celebrated its 150th anniversary. I remember the difficult new beginnings at this seat of learning with its many progressive traditions. After the Anglo-American air raids in February 1945 Dresden was reduced to a pile of rubble. Soviet soldiers and many voluntary helpers performed extraordinary feats to make the re-opening of the Technical College possible as early as October 1946. It bears witness to the tremendous willpower and the creative force of our scientists, workers and employees that this university has regained its erstwhile influence and power of attraction.

During the 150th anniversary celebrations in which I took part together with a party and government delegation many talks revealed the pride and resolve with which scientists and students were devoting themselves to their great responsibilities in research and education. I know from many encounters in industry and agriculture that the graduates of this Technical University and of all other universities and colleges in the country perform well in leading positions in the economy, the state and other fields of society. They contribute directly to the rising potential of our country and to further success on our road to socialism.

Many students from other socialist countries, above all from newly independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, receive thorough training in the natural sciences, technology and social sciences in our country. I know from my many meetings with foreign politicians and states-

men that our internationalist solidarity is highly appreciated and considered to be of great help in the development of their states.

Problems of scientific and technological progress are not just a matter for specialists engaged in research and development. We attach great importance to the development of the creative forces of the whole nation. The number of people who participate in scientific and technological innovation is on the increase all the time. It can justifiably be called a mass movement. The scientific spirit of innovation is stimulated by a multitude of public organisations and institutions. I would just point out the Chamber of Technology, our socialist engineers' organisation which has more than 230,000 members, the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (Urania), the competition among our youth in the fields of science and technology known as Young Innovators' Fairs, and the progress shows of students and young scientists.

With such a broad basis of scientific life favourable conditions for the participation of all working people in scientific progress develop naturally. In 1978 about 1.8 million working people, i. e. nearly one in three persons employed in the nationally owned economy, submitted valuable ideas, suggestions and patents. This saved the manufacturing and construction industries about 1,000 million marks worth of material and 90 million working hours. The average yield of every realised innovation came to 55,000 marks, and between 1971 and 1978 alone to some 29,000 million marks.

We support inventors generously in their activities. Their number increases as much as the number of patents submitted. In recent years for instance important inventions and innovations were honoured with the award of the GDR's National Prize. Among them were explosive forming, gas-insulated switchgear, an automatic measuring microscope, new models of sheet offset presses as well as outstanding achievements in the field of welding technology. It goes without saying that we give every inventor and innovator an adequate share in the yield of his work.

Special encouragement is given to the young in their drive for self-realisation, in their search for original, effective solutions. In turn they see science and technology as a field in which to prove themselves. Since their ideas are in demand our young inventors and innovators feel strengthened in their conviction that they are doing something for society and for themselves. In 1979 about 2.5 million young workers, cooperative farmers, students and scientists in factories and LPGs, in schools and universities proved their

creativity with more than 700,000 exhibition items at the already mentioned Young Innovators' Fairs.

To multiply further the outstanding results of this innovative and inventive activity is one of the main concerns of the direction and planning of scientific and technological progress. We guarantee every scientist, engineer and technician high social effectiveness while at the same time encouraging his creativity, initiative and inventive spirit. This is particularly true when scientists, engineers and technicians are called upon at an early stage to assist in the solution of problems, to identify themselves with them and to consider them a field for creative activity.

The crucial point is how the struggle for the rapid solution of complex problems for common aims is organised. Enthusiasm and passion, an atmosphere of genuine team work, unerring care for the progress of work and well-timed decisions are necessary. Here we make use of one of the greatest advantages of our economic system. It consists in the planning of far-reaching innovation processes on the national economic scale and their implementation in the interests of the people. We insist on the all-round steady rise of the level of scientific and technological work and proper organisation of the activity of scientists and engineers. Their ideas and their creativity must be brought to full fruition.

We pay great attention to making sure that we remain in the forefront of international developments where economically important products, technologies and processes are concerned. This takes primarily the form of an appeal to set such demanding targets and tasks that a substantial increase in efficiency and quality is achieved. By demanding but realistic targets I mean such as will spur on our scientists, technicians and innovators to make full use of all available resources.

A high performance level requires new scientific ideas, and, even more important, the ability to measure one's own performance critically against world standards. These demands and yardsticks have contributed to the increase in the number of those who bring a sense of responsibility and passion to their work for the attainment of economic targets.

Obviously the activity of inventors and innovators with regard to a given task is completed only when the results have proved their usefulness in production and on the market. The taut direction of research and development, and of the inventors' and innovators' movement, and the close cooperation of all concerned is primarily aimed at this objective.

Much emphasis is placed on a forward-looking approach in the direction

of research and technology. Successful combines and factories in our country are stable and develop steadily because their production is planned on a long-term basis with top-level scientific and technological performances. Qualitative changes are thus recognised in time and tackled thoroughly. Throughout the economy and in every factory science and technology are more and more guided in a uniform and long-term fashion as a continuous process advancing from research to the introduction and comprehensive application of their results.

We have today a clear idea of the further development of the national economic structure, of basic research in the mathematical and scientific fields, and of important spheres of science and technology over the period up to 1990. These long-term concepts are continually extended and brought up to date. They are complemented by the long-term concepts of the combines for the development of research, technology and production. We thus direct scientific and technological progress according to a unified concept looking many years ahead.

We found this an important prerequisite for the creation of favourable conditions for a multitude of inventions and innovations. I do not want to hide the fact that this has required hard work. Today we can declare that the scientific and technological progress, the activity of our inventors and innovators is receiving full attention in our planning and is especially supported by the general directors of our combines.

To maintain their initiative the inventors and innovators want their results not only to be sought after but also to be practically applied as quickly as possible. We have persistently searched for the most promising ways of combining science and production to this end. Optimum conditions for this were created in the form of efficient combines and the further improvement of our economic structure. Nowadays the combines comprise within themselves virtually everything that belongs organically together in order to produce and apply inventions in still larger measure and with higher yield. This will give new impetus to the acceleration of scientific and technological progress and its effectiveness.



As a guest of the Hermann Grosskopf family
in Berlin-Marzahn, 6 July 1978.

XXV

The millionth new home

Berlin construction workers had invited me to the handing-over of the one millionth new home that had been built since the 8th Party Congress in 1971. The date was 6 July 1978. At the construction site in Berlin-Marzahn I met veteran construction experts, workers, site managers and architects whom I had known for years. During a short meeting in front of the new block of flats foreman Benno Radtke said: "We keep our word, Comrade Honecker. Our finest moment comes when the work is done and the tenants can move in and feel at home." True enough. A worker's word carries weight here.

The mayor of the GDR's capital, Erhard Krack, symbolically handed the key of the apartment to worker Hermann Grosskopf. You could see the joy in the family's faces. I gladly accepted their invitation into their tastefully furnished new home. When we chatted over a cup of coffee in the comfortable sitting room I felt once more what it meant: one million homes. It means a millionfold family happiness. I looked out of the window at the large building site below. Where there had until recently been meadows and fields many people would soon have a beautiful home. Nearly one in five Berlin families. Our capital city had expanded and is changing literally every day under the diligent hands of the construction workers. This could not even

have been dreamt of only a few years ago. Our policy had set something in motion which is now assuming living shape everywhere in the country. How did this start?

I mentioned already that during the preparation for the SED's 8th Congress we had to analyse and consider very carefully where to lay the emphasis in our future social policy. From the outset there was agreement in the Politbureau that home construction was one such field. The question was, however, whether it would be sufficient to continue with the past growth rates. Had not the time come to set the targets higher both as regards volume and time schedules? Did we not have to put the solution of the housing problem, which had always been a declared target of our party, on the agenda as a concrete strategic task, as part of our economic and social policy?

Much spoke in favour of this. While we had reached a level where we could satisfy other essential requirements such as food and clothing, work and education at a relatively high standard, housing had become the most urgent social problem in our society. As I knew from many talks with workers and local politicians as well as from petitions from citizens, expectations in this respect were generally high.

Our Central Committee adopted a housing construction programme in October 1973 which had as its target the solution of the housing problem as a social issue by 1990. With this we are implementing a long-standing goal of the revolutionary workers' movement and a good part of the socialist programme. Guided by our responsibility for the well-being of our people we adopted housing construction as the centrepiece of the social policy programme of our party. Friedrich Engels had, as a young revolutionary, branded the miserable housing conditions in industrial towns in England in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Later on in his publication *The Housing Question* he revealed the multiple exploitation and dependence mechanism to which the working people were exposed in this respect. The course of history has fully confirmed his findings.

In the capitalist world housing conditions have not got better since but are to some extent getting worse. In this field as in others capitalism does not offer an acceptable alternative. No more than 100 years ago can the following observation of Friedrich Engels be contradicted today: "The housing question can be solved only when society has been sufficiently transformed for a start to be made towards abolishing the contrast between town and country, which has been brought to its extreme point by present-

day capitalist society ... only by the solution of the social question, that is by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, is the solution of the housing question made possible."

This observation of Engels has lost as little of its relevance as his following sentence: "In the beginning, however, each social revolution will have to take things as it finds them and do its best to get rid of the most crying evils with the means at its disposal."

I am very familiar with the housing conditions of the working people from personal experience. At Wiebelskirchen in the Saarland, the place of my childhood and youth, I had plenty of opportunity to get to know the often depressing housing conditions of miners and steel workers. My parental home was no exception. At times not only the eight of us but also my two uncles Ludwig and Peter Weidenhof, the latter with his family, lived in the small miner's house. Miners' families were not only short of space, the sanitary conditions too were highly unsatisfactory. There was no bathroom and no inside toilet; homes with running water were a rarity.

When later on my political activity took me to many parts of Germany and I often had to stay with friends and comrades in the Ruhr area — at Essen, Bochum and Oberhausen — I saw how the often miserable state of repair of many homes weighed down on people. Particularly in big cities and industrial areas it was no exception in the twenties and thirties and also after the Second World War that people who did not know each other at all had to share an apartment, that basements and garden sheds had to serve as permanent dwellings.

I remember well not only the workers' districts in Berlin and Leipzig but also in Paris, Amsterdam and Prague where I stayed temporarily between 1933 and 1935. During my stay in Berlin in 1935 I got to know proletarian housing conditions in the Wedding district. As in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district it was predominantly blue-collar workers and lower rank white-collar workers who lived there. During the period of German industrialisation these districts were built up so tightly with five-storey houses that many apartments in the two, sometimes three backyards — each of them 8 × 8 metres in size — never had any sunshine throughout the year. These tenements had literally been crammed with people. The situation of families with many children and that of old people was particularly miserable. It proved what the Berlin painter Heinrich Zille had said, that you can kill a person with a dwelling just as well as with an axe.

In view of this the KPD fought unflaggingly for the relief of the housing

squalor in the late twenties and early thirties. Under the heading "The Communists and the Housing Problem" it presented a detailed programme which stood out for its theoretical far-sightedness and its wealth of practical experience. It was based on a thorough analysis of the housing situation and gave clear guidelines as to how the battle against land speculation, rackrenting and profiteering in construction was to be conducted. Without using reformist clap-trap our party supported everything that would promote socially fairer construction of homes and towns. On this basis Wilhelm Pieck demanded in Berlin's Municipal Assembly in 1932 "... to establish the workers' state in which the supply of the working masses with homes would take first place".

The starting conditions which we found in 1945 for the solution of the housing problem were the worst imaginable. As a result of the war the majority of the apartment houses were in the worst condition. Superannuation and decades of neglected maintenance had accelerated wear and tear. In addition housing construction had been on the decline since the turn of the century for profit reasons and came almost to a complete standstill during the years of the Nazi war preparations.

The mass destruction of apartment houses and public buildings during the Second World War made things still worse. One German home in five was reduced to rubble by the Anglo-American bombing raids. Particularly hard hit were the big cities like Berlin, Dresden, Chemnitz (now Karl Marx Stadt) and Magdeburg where nearly half of all apartment houses and many schools, hospitals and public service establishments were destroyed.

During the early postwar years it was a top priority to give millions of evacuees a roof over their heads. This created a very tight housing situation on the territory of what was to become the GDR. The total number of homes had dropped from 5.1 million in 1939 to 4.8 million in 1946; during the same period the number of inhabitants had increased from 16.8 million to 18.5 million. While in 1939 there had been 303 homes for every 1,000 inhabitants, only 259 were left in 1946. The average occupation per apartment had increased from three persons in 1939 to four during the first postwar year.

These figures on their own do not, however, even begin to tell the whole story of the situation of many families. Individual rooms in bombed-out houses were used as dwellings. Many apartments housed several families and their children. Despite great efforts by the antifascist democratic forces of our people to clear the ruins left by the war and to speed up recon-

struction, there was for the time being no chance for a comprehensive and radical solution of the housing problem.

During the fifties and sixties the construction industry of the GDR did a lot to overcome the worst of the housing shortage. But even then its possibilities were limited. First and foremost the economy had to be restored and gradually built up in order to care for the most urgent needs of the population. The supply of essential goods and a balanced proportionate development of the economy had to be ensured.

After we had succeeded in guaranteeing a steady and increasing supply of food and developing an efficient consumer goods industry at a rapid pace, the construction and modernisation of homes had to become the focus of attention. This required greater efforts on the part of society.

Between 1951 and 1970 altogether about 1.1 million homes were newly built, that is an annual average of about 55,000. Housing construction developed particularly fast in Berlin, Magdeburg and Rostock and in the establishment of new towns such as Eisenhüttenstadt and Hoyerswerda in the fifties. One eighth of all investment during that period was put into housing construction. While this pace could not be maintained in the sixties the total number of homes in the GDR nevertheless grew to 5.9 million by the end of 1970. With a population of about 17 million there were 345 homes per 1,000 inhabitants in 1970.

At the beginning of the seventies the economic potential and the needs of our advanced socialist society for further expansion made it possible and necessary to let the nexus between production and care for the material and intellectual needs of the people make itself felt more directly. Thus the conditions were created for the elaboration of a long-term housing construction programme. We put this task on the agenda.

But it was not just the capitalist heritage which had brought the housing problem so much to the fore. People had changed thoroughly during the 25 years of socialist development. The need for more education and cultural spare-time activity made home conditions appear in a different light. It was of no small importance that shorter working hours gave the working people more leisure time.

Adequate homes are of considerable importance for a happy and contented family life, for active work and effective participation in social life. Last but not least the party considered that the solution of the still remaining housing problems would encourage young couples in their desire to have children. This was both a matter of individual fulfilment and a social concern.

All this — the whole framework for life which we had created — gave the solution of the housing problem ■ very high priority in the further development of our country.

The solution of the housing problem has a decisive place in our policy because the construction of homes together with the related social facilities, and the planning of towns, villages and estates, is a crucial factor in the shaping of the material basis for the socialist way of life. Our party considers housing construction as a whole complex of measures. These include above all the construction of day nurseries, kindergartens and schools, holiday homes, health establishments, shopping facilities and places for culture, recreation and sport. Thus our comprehensive housing policy determines in no small degree future social structures, the content, forms and ways of life of future generations.

In our policy we always pay attention to the social effects of housing construction as well as to the economic problems connected with it. Therefore we had to include in our plans for the seventies not only extensive measures for the industrialisation of housing construction — factories for building elements, erection capacities and modern technologies. We had also to bear in mind something else. If we improved the housing conditions for nearly one quarter of the GDR's population considerably in the seventies, the demand for durable consumer goods would increase substantially as well. Analyses had shown that on average every family when moving into ■ new home spent about 6,000 marks on furnishing it. That meant for instance that for the 160,000 new homes built in 1979 we had to expect additional demand for furniture, furnishings and light fittings amounting to one billion marks.

However, the effect was still more far-reaching. It involved all factors in the economic plans for the seventies which affected the realisation of our homebuilding programme and the improvement of our housing. Much higher amounts had to be allocated in the state budget for the construction of new homes, for maintenance, for social facilities and many other things. The greater part of these expenditures is borne by the state, not by the population, in our republic. To mention just one example: Despite rising expenditure on housing we have kept rents stable and unchanged. Stable rents are an important element of material security in families. This explains why no more than between 2 and ■ per cent of family income need to be spent on rents. By comparison, statistics from capitalist states, e. g. the FRG, show that there between 13 and 35 per cent of income have to be spent

on rent and even rents for council housing are rising steadily. These increases amounted to about 250 per cent between 1965 and 1977 alone.

When we gave homebuilding top priority we knew, of course, that there were many other urgent problems which had to be solved step by step. The leadership of a socialist state always faces the task of deciding which problems should be tackled first in the interests of the people and how social proportions are to be maintained.

Following an analysis of the stock of existing homes and the developing need for housing we began working out exact proposals for a comprehensive development of construction, including the necessary expenditure and investment for the building industry and ancillary industries. From the outset we were keen to benefit from the experiences and suggestions of the working people. We were particularly interested in the opinion of the construction workers. The highest demands in the attainment of the ambitious targets are made on them. From them we got not only broad approval but a wealth of useful suggestions, impulses and valuable pledges.

As I think back the visits to the construction sites at Amtsfeld, Berlin-Köpenick — now the Salvador Allende District — and the concrete factory of the Berlin housing construction combine on 12 May 1972 come to mind. The construction workers spoke with deep commitment about their work; they also pointed out some deficiencies in the management and organisation which had to be removed in order to mobilise reserves faster and more effectively.

A little later we met the Bitterhofs, a working-class family who had moved into a just completed home. This worker from the Berlin yacht-building yard told me: "We are particularly glad that our four children can grow up in such a beautiful home."

The informative working visit was concluded by a conference with the party organisation of the Berlin construction workers. Their basic position was summed up by foreman Franz Hohlfeld: "The knowledge that every new home means more happiness and contentment spurs us all on to build well, faster and more economically." During the consultation I declared: "We have found today that the resolutions of the party meet with great approval. Now that we have created such a beautiful city centre the task is to create homes for all those people who deserve them and have a claim to them. We must envisage that after 1975 we shall be tackling such tasks on a much broader scale than we can imagine today. Our aim is to create a housing situation for the working people of our republic which even better expresses our socialist ideas."

In the middle of 1973 a thorough study of the development of housing conditions in the GDR was submitted to the Politbureau. We decided that already in the next five-year plan between 750,000 and 800,000 and in the period up to 1990 between 2.8 and 3 million homes should be newly built or modernised. I must add here that for understandable reasons there were also doubts as to the wisdom of binding ourselves in the long term to such a programme which, of course, would take up a big share of our national income. We were aware that the solution of social problems always involves issues which affect the population as a whole. Consequently they have a great economic impact and cannot be realised from one day to the next. Our decision in favour of the housing programme was based on the recognition that the interrelations between people's work performance, their educational opportunities and their housing conditions must be given more and more attention. Only in this way can the human personality be fully developed and man — the main productive force be enabled to turn out high performances. This is at the bottom of our conviction that the homebuilding programme constitutes the centrepiece of our social policy. The success of the Soviet Union proved to be very valuable in this context. Our Soviet friends made important contributions from the planning stage onwards. The experiences in town construction in the USSR were of fundamental significance. Within the framework of long-term cooperation in research we collaborate nowadays in scientific and technological projects of building construction, technology and development of construction materials. In addition the Soviet Union supplies us with complete housing factories which contribute essentially to the fast improvement of performance in our construction industry. Our life would be unthinkable without the numerous contacts between construction workers, teams and combines which have developed in the exchange of experiences between the two countries.

As I mentioned already our party's Central Committee determined in October 1973 the most important targets and tasks for the solution of the housing problem up to 1990. It established the measures to be taken to increase the capacity and efficiency of the construction industry and to create the material and technical preconditions for this. The main feature of our homebuilding programme is that by 1990 every family and every independent household must have a home of adequate size and quality. The crucial aim is to overcome historical discrepancies in housing conditions. In doing this we are following a fundamental law of socialist construction, i.e. bringing the different classes and sections of our society ever closer

together. It was therefore obvious that good quality homes had to be built particularly for workers' families and young couples. Our motto could therefore only be: No luxury homes for the few, but good homes for all. This requires building in a purpose-oriented and economic manner, but at the same time meeting adequate standards. In this manner is realised the humanist aim which many representatives of the Bauhaus had in mind: to create residential districts free of contrasts perpetuated in stone between poor and rich, districts in which all inhabitants feel comfortable and where their children grow up surrounded by human warmth and social security.

However, the construction of homes with relatively equal standards of comfort must not be mistaken—as is often done—for a levelling of housing conditions. On the contrary: we believe that a socially fair housing programme must offer differentiation: homes for families with many children, homes in city centres and in green belts, homes which meet the specific needs of shift workers in industry, those of cooperative peasants, or those of artists. The Civil Code of the GDR spells out the rights of tenants and provisions for their protection, including one which says that 60 per cent of all newly built homes must go to workers' families. Finally, it is necessary to ensure low rents which permit every citizen to move into and keep a good quality home.

The homebuilding programme for the period up to 1990, with its budgeted expenditure of about 200,000 million marks, is the biggest investment programme the GDR has ever undertaken. Besides the construction of homes it comprises the creation of all necessary community establishments like schools, day nurseries and kindergartens, special homes for older and handicapped citizens as well as trade, health, cultural, sports and leisure facilities. This complex character of the housebuilding programme is crucial to its social effectiveness. It is more than just a matter of putting roofs over people's heads.

Our party's programme states: "The provision of new housing will have a growing effect on the general standard of housing, on meaningful leisure pursuits and human relations." We want people to feel comfortable in their home surroundings, to be able to lead a cultured life in an atmosphere of human warmth and safety.

It is true that the world has heard many high-sounding declarations about housing construction. But our homebuilding programme not only proclaims that it will benefit all people in towns and in rural areas, particularly the workers. It also contains a basic strategy for attaining this goal.

The unity of new construction, modernisation and maintenance is an essential feature of this programme. Besides the construction of large residential areas we attach increasing importance to the conservation and modernisation of existing homes in areas with older buildings. In 1971 40 per cent of all homes had been built before the First World War. Only 39 per cent had a bath or shower. We therefore concluded that it was neither possible nor necessary to build a completely new stock of homes by 1990. But the inhabitants of older homes have the same right to comfortable living quarters as those citizens who receive a new home. For this reason whole inner city areas with older buildings are being reconstructed. This is socially and economically important for the systematic restoration of the considerable number of existing buildings which are worth conserving. It is also a realistic way of rejuvenating our cities. We thus not only tackle the problem of decaying inner cities, which is acute in many countries, but save national assets and conserve historically valuable structures which constitute the unique features of many cities.

Our homebuilding programme therefore also gives a decisive impetus to town planning and architecture. This is because it combines the old with the new in a human environment in which a process of social harmonisation takes place.

This can be seen especially in the redevelopment of our capital of Berlin for which we are now implementing plans which extend to the threshold of the next century. In this way we shall gradually overcome the sad heritage left behind by capitalism here in particular. We shall create comfortable housing conditions for all citizens and shape our capital so that it will be able to do justice to its political and cultural functions and to its role in promoting international understanding.

After the war I, like many other people in Berlin, helped with the removal of rubble. Understandably I have always had a warm feeling for our capital and for the industrious Berliners. I give my support to everything that will help to make this city more beautiful and to strengthen its reputation as a metropolis.

Our capital is in many ways connected with the life of the whole GDR. If one reviews the period that has elapsed since its foundation around 1230 until the present time one can justifiably say that its face and history have been shaped by the power of the workers and peasants. Today's Berlin, the capital of the GDR, consists not only of the famous Unter den Linden, nor only of its old and new residential areas which fill it with life, nor yet of

its old and new shopping streets. Literally risen from the ashes this Berlin is becoming more and more the symbol of the victorious advance of socialism on German soil.

Never before in the many centuries of Berlin's chequered history was the life of its inhabitants more humanly dignified, socially secure, progressive and peace-loving than in our socialist present. In this city from which four decades ago the most catastrophic war of modern times originated under the criminal rule of Nazism, where 34 years ago house after house, street after street was liberated by the heroes of the Soviet army, we were able to found our GDR 30 years ago. As the capital of our workers' and peasants' state Berlin has since demonstrated the creativity of our people who have successfully realised the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the ideals of socialism.

As a politician one must not be satisfied with mere figures because in the end quality decides whether people feel content in their home environment. Therefore time and again we draw the architects' attention to the importance of designing bright, friendly residential areas. Architecture should appeal to the emotions and strengthen in everybody the awareness which might be expressed as follows: I am at home here, this is my homeland in which I can live freely and enjoy equality of rights.

The creation of such a home environment—as the history of construction in our country over the last thirty years proves—is greatly enhanced by such advantages of the socialist society as the state's control over the land, the complete elimination of all land speculation and the development of a non-profit-oriented construction and housing sector. For this reason we do not allow buildings and traffic installations to develop in our city centres which arbitrarily destroy harmony and organically valuable town structures. It goes without saying that construction in city centres involves higher expenditure. This does not, however, result in an additional burden for the people who live in these centres. Dependent on the quality of the apartment the rent comes to 0.90 to 1.20 marks per square metre regardless of whether it is located in the centre of the capital or in a peripheral area.

Our decision in favour of the housing programme was based on the recognition that only a long-term political strategy would make it possible to develop all the intellectual and material potential of the country which is necessary to solve the housing problem. Fast increases in the efficiency of the construction industry are decisive for the realisation of this programme. Since we had to solve this problem essentially without additional

manpower, we concentrated on the application of modern industrial construction methods and technologies.

This problem was at the centre of the 6th construction conference of the SED Central Committee and the GDR's Council of Ministers in April 1975. At this conference in which working people from the construction, building materials and ancillary industries, together with scientists and representatives of social organisations, took part, the direction was set for the future housing construction. The main approach to increasing efficiency in construction is the intensification of production and the industrialisation of the construction processes. We set the task of creating a housing construction industry capable of producing efficiently and with high quality standards everything—from a bath tub to a whole residential area—necessary for living. For this alone our state has allocated more than 7,000 million marks in investment since 1973.

While the necessary decisions had to be made by the state, it remained crucial to make the housing programme a cause for all involved in construction, and indeed for the whole population. Like myself many other party activists went to the building sites, the construction materials factories, research institutes and planning offices in order to explain the aim of our housing programme and to promote initiatives for its realisation. It is no exaggeration to say that our party and the construction people are on the closest possible terms. However, this is not surprising because the outlook in the building sector is bright for decades ahead.

It is only natural that the homebuilding programme should right from the beginning meet with a widespread and positive response from the population. I myself received many letters from citizens who welcomed this programme wholeheartedly. On this basis millions of people displayed a large measure of initiative in improving their housing conditions. Starting with our biggest cities—Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden—for whose development the Politbureau had decreed special long-term construction programmes for the period up to 1990—all cities and towns have nowadays concepts for the solution of the housing problem in their areas. Thousands of consultations between people's representatives, National Front committees and citizens have taken place as a concrete expression of socialist democracy, i.e. public participation in planning and decision-making processes.

A competition organised by the GDR's National Front to enhance the appearance of our towns and communities plays an important role here. A large and still growing number of citizens take part in this. They lend

a hand with the maintenance of their apartment houses, kindergartens and schools. The members of workers' housing cooperatives and, not least, the owners of owner-occupied houses put in a considerable effort in their spare time. The increase in value created in this way in recent years has been enormous. This ties in well with our principle that improvement of housing must take place everywhere in town and country.

In this context we have encouraged the construction of owner-occupied houses, particularly in rural areas. They contribute about 11 per cent to the total programme of new housing, benefiting primarily workers' families and families with many children. They are given land free of charge to build on and generous credit, where necessary up to the total cost of construction. Repayment is arranged in such a way that the citizens, according to their social situation, are not burdened any more than by paying rent for a comparable home from the state's building programme.

With these varied forms of new home construction, modernisation and conservation of existing buildings we are able to implement the housing programme in all parts of our country with a high degree of social effectiveness and at acceptable costs. The people are not only in charge of our housing programme, they are also the shapers of their social environment.

The leadership of party and state follows the implementation of the programme attentively. This is also reflected in the activities of the regional authorities. Central decisions are taken in good time in order to deal with newly arisen problems. Thus the 5th meeting of the Central Committee in March 1977 dealt intensively with the implementation of the resolutions of the 9th Party Congress. Based on a wealth of excellent practical experience, the most effective solutions for the achievement of the targets of home construction contained in the five-year plan for 1976 to 1980 and for exceeding these targets were pointed out in a comprehensive resolution. This clear orientation towards high efficiency and quality in housing construction, which has since been specified in further detail on the basis of new insights, is a clear direction for action. Amicable consultations with construction workers have supported their creative striving for high performance in the socialist competition considerably. All this has gradually contributed to the reliable achievement of the plan targets in each successive year.

Even though we have as yet completed only part of the programme, important stages have been reached which are of great significance for the programme as a whole. In the first place we have expanded the industrial

basis of the construction industry considerably through the joint efforts of all sectors of the economy. This put us in a position to double the volume of housing construction in 1971 and at the same time to produce about 80 per cent of residential buildings by industrial methods in highly mechanised "house factories". The number of newly constructed or modernised homes per annum rose from about 86,700 in 1971 to nearly 163,000 in 1979. Altogether that meant 1,272,000 homes in nine years and thus more than in the whole period from 1945 to 1970. Since 1971 home conditions were improved for more than 3.6 million people, that is for one family in every five. The total number of homes grew, and at 6.7 million has reached the number of households in our country. In 1979 we had 399 homes for every 1,000 inhabitants.

The interim balance-sheet shows that we have an average of 23.6 square metres of living space per inhabitant, which means a further improvement in our international ranking. The social quality of the housing programme can only be appreciated when it is taken into account that in most cases rent amounts to less than 5 per cent of family income. In our country no working-class family is forced to give up its home because of too high rent.

An essential element which determines the social character of our housing programme, and hence also of our town planning, is that we include establishments for child care, schools, sports facilities and playgrounds. About a quarter of these new facilities have been created since 1971. There are few countries where so much construction is done for the coming generation.

It needs no explanation that substantial financing from the socialist state is required in order to secure and enhance such an ambitious social standard. The policy of stable prices for essential foodstuffs and other goods to meet basic needs as well as stable rents, which we maintain under increasing strain from foreign trade conditions, has strengthened the people's confidence in the state. It has given rise to multiple initiatives for the increase of efficiency in material production. Good housing conditions create a social climate in which the interactions between economic and social policy flourish particularly well for the benefit of all.

When we embarked on the housing programme after the 8th Party Congress there were many among the capitalist mass media who tried to sow doubt and disbelief. As so often before, these prophecies were shortlived. The facts created day after day, year after year speak a convincing language. They confirm beyond a shadow of doubt that we are on the right path and that we are fulfilling our housing programme for the benefit of the people.



At a reception given in honour of outstanding women
at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany
on the occasion of International Women's Day, 7 March 1980.

XXVI

A birthrate again on the rise

Particularly gratifying effects of our economic and social policy have found expression in the development of the birthrate in the GDR. In this respect we, like many other industrial countries, had our problems since the second half of the sixties. By 1973 the number of live births per 1,000 inhabitants had dropped to 10.6. That meant 180,336 babies. The cause was the unfavourable population structure resulting from the Second World War. Further reasons were that young couples had to wait too long for a home of their own, that the number of working women had increased substantially and that their level of qualifications had risen rather abruptly. Simultaneously the training periods for young women lengthened, most of them taking up jobs or going in for further education. As a result they were giving birth to the first child at an age when young women previously had already been expecting their second child. Meanwhile more children are again being born in the GDR every year. In 1979 alone there were 235,233. That is nearly 55,000 or roughly 30 per cent more than in 1973. The number of live births per 1,000 inhabitants thus rose to 14.

All citizens of our country including myself are, of course, happy about this rise in the number of births. It reflects the favourable climate for children in our country which results from the material security enjoyed by the

families and from people's confidence in the future. People here say not without justice that he who has a positive attitude to the future has a positive attitude to having children. In our socialist state children are born into a favourable environment. They have all the love of family and society. We do everything to prevent them ever knowing hunger or war. From the first hour of their lives they are looked after by an efficient health service. Our educational system enables them to develop their talents and abilities to the full. Not one young person needs to worry about an apprenticeship or finding a job. Every individual is needed and his achievements are recognised.

The increase in the number of births is significant for us for yet another reason. Since 1972 women in the GDR have been able to decide for themselves about pregnancy and termination of pregnancy. This fulfils a long-standing demand by the revolutionary German workers' movement, which has been supported by many doctors, jurists and intellectuals.

After the First World War the situation of workers' wives and workers' families was difficult. I know their poverty and squalor from personal experience, and I know how the miners' families had to struggle in my Saar homeland to feed their children and themselves, to get clothes and maintain a roof over their heads. At that time an unwanted child was a tragedy.

The performance of the play *Cyankali* in the late twenties, i.e. during the worldwide depression, moved me as a young communist deeply. This provocative piece by the physician and author Friedrich Wolf expressed the voice of the people in their struggle against the anti-abortion Article 218 in the Penal Code. In October 1931 the parliamentary group of the KPD in the Reichstag proposed to legalise the interruption of pregnancy. This proposal was acclaimed by the public but not by the bourgeois parliament. So everything remained as it had been. What was forbidden to proletarian women, what many of them paid for with permanent ill health or even with their lives, what not a few of them were sent to prison for, was no problem for the rich. At any time women of the upper classes could and did afford expensive terminations of pregnancies. I myself was never in any doubt but that Article 218 and the double standard had to go!

I have therefore endeavoured to bring about a solution in our republic which would be compatible with women's equality of rights in education and work, marriage and family life. On the initiative of our party and in accordance with a joint resolution by the Politbureau and the GDR's Council of Ministers the draft of a law governing the termination of preg-

nancy was submitted to the 500 members of the Volkskammer on 9 March 1972. It was adopted and made law by an absolute majority with only 14 votes against and eight abstentions. Thus after the previously established rights to work and to equal pay for equal work, to education, recreation and special promotion, women were now given the right to decide on their own responsibility, i.e. in their own judgement of their personal, work and family situation and expectations for the future, on the time when they wanted to give birth to a child. This recognises the right and the dignity of women and protects the health and life of mother and child.

There were voices which questioned whether, in view of the age pyramid which had been deformed by the war, such a measure was not premature, whether the birthrate would not drop still further. But we were of the opinion that the time had come to give women this truly human right, a decision which serves their own happiness in life and strengthens the family. I should like to say generally that all objections which were raised from various quarters against the law have without exception been proved unfounded. The number of births in the GDR rose from 179,127 in 1974 to 181,789 in 1975, to 195,483 in 1976, to 223,152 in 1977, to 232,151 in 1978 and finally to 235,233 in 1979. The fear that it might encourage immorality among the young was refuted by the growing number of marriages and births at an early age.

In the same way the fear that women would suffer damage to their health in exercising their right of decision was not confirmed. On the contrary. While in 1971, a year before the law was adopted, the mortality rate of mothers was still 4.1 per 1,000 deliveries it dropped, thanks to the operations carried out by doctors in clinics and hospitals, to 2.0 in 1978. During the same period the mortality rate of babies was reduced from 18 per 1,000 live births to 13. By the same token the decree that termination of pregnancy would be treated like a case of illness under labour and insurance law, and the distribution of contraceptives free of charge proved to be absolutely right. Illegal abortion belongs as a result completely to the past in our country. It is fully in keeping with the purpose of this law that women prefer contraception to termination of pregnancy. Since 1973 the number of terminations of pregnancy has dropped considerably while at the same time the number of births has risen.

Thus equal rights for women became a reality in the GDR. Even in the first version of the Constitution of the GDR equal rights for men and women had already been laid down as one of the most important human rights.

Nothing changed in this respect in the following years. Article 20 of our 1974 Constitution was considerably more precise. It reads: "Men and women shall have equal rights and their legal status shall be equal in all fields of social, national and personal life. Encouragement of women particularly where vocational qualification is concerned shall be a duty of society and the state."

From the outset we have not limited ourselves to guaranteeing the constitutional equal rights of men and women. One of the first laws passed by our workers' and peasants' state was the "Maternal and Child Care and Rights of Women" Act of 27 September 1950. This was the basis for bringing social reality into line with constitutional law, smoothening the road to voluntary participation in the production process for millions of women and encouraging their wish to acquire the knowledge necessary for it. The law stipulated state aid and support for mother and child. It declared marriage and the family to be a pillar of society and decreed equal rights for men and women in family law.

Government responsibility for women working in production and the reservation of their jobs were guaranteed. The law says for instance: "The work for women in production shall not be restricted to traditional women's jobs but shall extend to all branches of production ... Opportunities for women's qualification in all kinds of jobs shall be created." Finally the law provided for a systematic increase of women's share in responsible functions of the state and society. It committed local authorities and nationally owned enterprises to create facilities for the care of children of working mothers. All in all it was decreed how equal rights for women were to be systematically realised in practice.

If today we can claim to be a country of equal rights and one that welcomes children, the creative and industrious contribution of women to the development of socialist society and the increase of our economic strength has made an important contribution to this. Incidentally, 87.6 per cent of all able-bodied women work or study nowadays. By 1979 there were 4.1 million working women and 630,000 girls and women of working age studying. Every year the number of women in the economy rises and accounts at present for 50.2 per cent of the working population.

Of course, as time went by women's motivation for going out to work changed. At first, after the demise of Nazism, it was sheer necessity for them. At the time we had about 11.6 million citizens of working age. Women outnumbered men by more than two million. All these women had become

the sole breadwinners of their families. Most of them who then took part in the democratic reconstruction as *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble removers) or in other fields had still no idea that a process had thus started which was to be of fundamental significance for their equality of rights. Later on it dawned on them that formal employment would enable them to apply their knowledge and skills and to be useful beyond their own four walls. This further enhanced women's self-respect and their economic independence of men. Having a job became a genuine desire for the majority of women. They can no longer imagine their lives—as they themselves say—without it.

If we were only to list all the ways in which women take part in economic development, this would be most impressive in itself. Working at a job, being paid according to one's performance, having a firm place in a working collective and taking part in public affairs has brought about completely new attitudes and ways of thinking in women as well as men.

Women's right to equal education was of particular importance. To have it guaranteed meets, in our opinion, the socialist ideal of all-round education and the harmonious development of the personality. It is indivisible and equally valid for men and women. By contrast to all previous orders of society we have opened the gates of all institutions of learning, including universities, for the children of workers and for women. And they in turn take advantage of their right to education. It was this fact that made it possible for me to declare in the report to the 9th Party Congress of the SED: "Women have their definite place in all fields of life. With the young generation there are hardly any differences left as to their chances to develop their talents and abilities. Girls and boys are equally well prepared for life." Ninety-nine per cent of female school leavers who do not go on to further education learn a trade or craft.

As a result of all this 71.8 per cent of all women employed in the economy have nowadays completed an apprenticeship or have an even higher qualification. At the beginning of our socialist development the figure was only 5 per cent. Every other person with advanced technical training and almost every one in three with a university or college education today is female. Female students at universities and colleges account for 52.5 per cent, and at technical training colleges for 82.6 per cent of the total. This is the situation in the field of education, and nowadays everybody would be astonished if it were any different.

It is in the nature of a socialist state to have equal rights for women not just on paper but in fact. This requires, among other things, the gradual

creation of conditions which make it possible to make regular employment and motherhood compatible. Realising that this cannot be achieved by individual women and families our party programme stipulates the creation of: "... such conditions everywhere as will do justice to women's equal status in society. Their working and living conditions shall be further improved. The need to strengthen the social position of women and to develop their personality requires systematic work to enable women to combine their work in a job still more successfully with their tasks as mothers and in their families."

Society's support for working women is guaranteed through an extensive network of social institutions and services such as day nurseries, kindergartens, laundries, and factory and school catering. In this way we succeed in having the material expenses and efforts connected with birth, education and care of children borne and recognised more and more by society. This finds expression in a number of policy measures aimed specifically at working mothers. I shall just mention the prolongation of leave at full pay before and after giving birth to 26 weeks, the increase of one-time government assistance for every child to 1,000 marks, the reduction of weekly working hours to 40 hours without any loss of income for full-time working mothers with two or more children up to 16 years of age and the extension of annual leaves, depending on the number of children, up to 29 working days and the creation of still more places in pre-school institutions.

To my knowledge we have now reached a leading position in the world where the availability of child care facilities is concerned. Nowadays 60 per cent of all children up to their third year are looked after in day nurseries, and more than 92 per cent of all children between the ages of three and six or seven years, i. e. until they enter school, are cared for, trained and reared in kindergartens in a lively and happy atmosphere by well-qualified experts. Seventy-seven per cent of all schoolchildren take school meals: this means a hot meal plus a quarter litre of milk every day. After lessons children from the first to the fourth grades can learn and play in play centres under the guidance of teachers and other trained staff till late in the afternoon. The Pioneer Organisation and the youth federation also do a lot to provide sensible leisure activities for all schoolchildren.

New construction, expansion and modernisation of all these facilities have been and shall be given much attention by the state. They are a definite part of our integrated socialist education system.

Particularly worth mentioning is the support our state gives to all large

families with four or more children and to single citizens with three children. Besides the monthly child benefit they receive substantial financial and material support. They enjoy ■ preferred status where allocation of housing accommodation is concerned and pay ■ rent which does not exceed 3 per cent of family income. They also pay reduced charges for public services and transport as well as enjoy other benefits.

All these things constitute conditions which a working mother needs in order to surround her children with the love, attention and warmth which they naturally expect from her. Over an extended period of time, thanks to the workers' and peasants' power, conditions anchored in law have developed which permit us to declare that the children born in our state are desired and wanted. I am sure this answers the question which is often asked abroad as to why our birthrate is rising.

The genuine equality of rights of men and women is one of the vital well-springs of socialism, a proof of its superiority over other forms of society. Work, education and the unlimited recognition of their social function as mothers make women nowadays genuine citizens in their own right. What has remained in our state of the old discrimination, of the social tutelage and dependence of women? Nothing! In the GDR women have their own point of view and know how to stand up for it. They are partners at their place of work and in the representative assemblies of the people. Like men women use their ability to follow and judge national and international events and to take an active part in political life. This is a great success of socialism and of inestimable value for our communist future.

After all women are not a small social group; in our country they represent more than half of the population. To establish their equality of rights requires substantial expenditure. But expenditure alone will not suffice. Much higher demands are made upon society, upon the cultural standards of the people. Many deep-rooted backward opinions about women and their role in society must be overcome in practice. Our party has actively and patiently encouraged the process of rethinking. In an alliance of all social forces a lot of work is being done—reaching right into family life—to make it absolutely clear that the work of women in employment, their vocational and political training, their participation in public life, are necessary and right. Lenin was right in pointing out that achievements can only be considered lasting if “they have penetrated culture, everyday life and customs”. We may say today that within the historically short period of time we had at our disposal much has been achieved. The new social position of women in

everyday life is visible to everybody. It exceeds by far what has at best been formally decreed in the constitutions of many countries with regard to equal rights for women.

I am very familiar with this development. For many years my responsibilities in the Politbureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee included questions concerning the advancement of women. Incidentally, this section of work in the Politbureau and Secretariat has been in the hands of a woman for years: Inge Lange who was secretary of the FDJ's Central Council in the fifties. Our party has always considered the tasks and problems connected with the equality and advancement of women as a social cause. It is bound up with fundamental political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural changes so that it cannot be left to women alone to fight for their interests.

I remember for instance a conference of our party in the mid-sixties at Karl Marx Stadt, an industrial centre of our country. At the time I criticised the fact that many leading people in the economy, while acknowledging the principle of women's equality, in practice placed a lower value on their abilities than on those of men. It was not easy even for party members, who theoretically fully approved of it, to draw the right conclusions in their activities. Today these problems have been largely overcome. Women take part in work, planning and government. In the local election of 1979 for instance 72,031 women were elected as deputies. This means approximately 36 per cent of the total. This proportion is not much smaller in the Volkskammer and in county assemblies.

My responsibilities have frequently given me opportunities of talking to women. I have been impressed time and again on such occasions by the responsibility with which they use their knowledge and abilities for the development of our country. For instance when I visited the newly completed power station of Boxberg I met the young woman in charge of the sophisticated control desk. The information she gave me on energy problems could hardly have been surpassed by a government minister. On such occasions one's heart is really uplifted to see how well-educated and competent our women are today.

They are men's equals in leading functions as well. Nearly one third of leading functions in all fields of society are exercised by women. This means one in six leading functions in industry and agriculture, one in three in institutions of higher education, and one in two in the trade sector. Half of the number of judges and 25 per cent of all mayors and one in five district

medical officers are women. This proportion justifies our claim that these are no longer exceptional cases, but that a development has taken place which will certainly gather further momentum in years to come.

I should not like to omit mentioning those changes which are taking place in family life within our advanced socialist society. It has often been claimed that communists have no interest in family life, even that they wanted to destroy it. Well, this reproach has already been answered by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847. More than 130 years later nothing needs to be added.

The increasing number of marriages is not just an expression of the normal course of events in which people get married at a certain age. It also shows how secure and at their ease young people feel in our country, what a high measure of material security they enjoy. In our country marriage and the family have long ceased to be welfare institutions for women and children. Their foundations are no longer to be found in economic pressures but in love and mutual respect, understanding and mutual help in everyday life and joint responsibility for the children. Most men appreciate their wives' having jobs even with regard to their children as well, and I can therefore say without exaggerating that love for children is a synonym for GDR. This confirms in many respects what our party's programme states: "The complete equality of rights of the marriage partners, the growing economic independence of women and their steadily improved chances of participation on equal terms in social life have created qualitatively new circumstances for the personal ties entered into by marriage and with the foundation of a family. Children give meaning and happiness to a marriage."

We have a very beautiful tradition. Every year on International Women's Day a reception is given by the Central Committee for deserving women of the GDR. It is well known that 70 years ago Clara Zetkin proposed that this day be dedicated to the struggle of women all around the world for peace, democracy, social progress and equal rights. Nor is it for me a merely formal exercise of duty when I meet outstanding women and girls of our country on 8 March every year in my capacity as general secretary of the SED Central Committee and chairman of the GDR's Council of State.

Among them are experienced women activists of the early days of the GDR, young female top workers and outstanding female cooperative farmers, women who were present at the birth of our republic and those who are daughters of our republic, gifted female engineers and competent female

teachers, world-renowned sportswomen and popular artists, mothers who do their duty in everyday life.

I shall not forget the encounter with women from 142 countries which I had in 1975 during the World Congress for International Women's Year. The GDR's capital was then host to this important congress, and I was honoured with the task of welcoming the delegates from all parts of the world. This world gathering turned out to be an event of great moment and its results carried great political weight. More than 2,000 representatives from all continents had gathered in Berlin. To my knowledge, never before had women representing so many countries and nationalities, or such different creeds and philosophies, got together to demonstrate their joint desire for equality of rights, progress and peace. In their glorious national dress, with different colours of skin, they symbolised an image of human togetherness, of beauty and optimism. Their resolve made it clear that with the strength of women it would be possible to fulfil the centuries-old dream of mankind to create a world of peace. Who else could understand better that social progress, material security, happiness and well-being can only be achieved under conditions of peace? After all it is always women and children who suffer most from war and its consequences.

The delegates from all parts of the world felt that for our country the struggle to safeguard peace was the highest commandment. This could be gathered from the way they expressed their joy at making the acquaintance of our country. After all, more than half of the delegates to this world congress were visiting a socialist country for the first time. Among them were representatives of many national and international women's organisations with great traditions which had been calling for the implementation of equal rights for women for a long time. To hear from such women how much they appreciated what had been done here for the genuine equality of rights of men and women since the foundation of the GDR filled us with joy and satisfaction. I am sure that these women from all parts of the world have taken home with them lasting impressions and new knowledge.

All that I have said here about the changes in the life of our country concerns, it should be remembered, the first generation of women who enjoy equality of rights. It is easy to imagine what further blossoming and growth will come to our republic from future generations. If our party had done nothing but to awaken the strength of women and give them the place in society which is their due, this alone would prove the humanity and progressive nature of socialism.



Cordial encounter with guests from Vietnam
during the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students
in Berlin, 3 August 1973.

XXVII

With youth for a communist future

On the eve of the 30th anniversary of the GDR hundreds of thousands of FDJ members gathered in Berlin's Unter den Linden for an impressive torchlight procession. It began with a moving symbolic scene. Members of the FDJ and a Thälmann Pioneer received a burning torch from a veteran of the revolutionary German worker's youth movement, the flame of the revolution. At the same moment fists were raised everywhere to give Thälmann's salute.

This picture reminded me of the historic torchlight procession of 11 October 1949 when 200,000 FDJ members saluted the newly founded first workers' and peasants' state on German soil and its president Wilhelm Pieck. Thirty years later boys and girls who had already grown up under socialism renewed the vow of the GDR youth of 1949 with their avowal of allegiance to the socialist fatherland.

The memory of my first encounter with Ernst Thälmann in November 1932 was also revived. He said then that it was a vital task for the revolutionary movement that the communists win the youth for the revolution. Revolution without youth is only half a revolution, it cannot win, he told us. We have always endeavoured to act in his spirit. We have succeeded in passing on the positions of the revolutionary workers' movement from

generation to generation. I count it among the most honourable duties of a communist to concern himself with the education of the young generation, to protect and further the fighting community of young and old.

At the 8th Party Congress ■ new stage of our youth policy began. We had to take into account that important changes had taken place inside and outside the GDR since the beginning of the seventies. The situation had changed further in favour of the forces of socialism and peace. The ideological conflict between the two great social systems, especially the struggle for the minds of the young generation, had intensified. The scientific and technological revolution and socialist economic integration had also influenced the consciousness of the young. Higher demands were being made on their education, their vocational skills and their moral and ideological attitudes.

We had to pay attention to the fact that every new generation approaches socialism differently, not in the same way, not in the same form, not in the same situation as their fathers did. For the young people socialist conditions were already taken for granted. The mass of them were closely connected with socialism as a reality, experienced it practically and personally. I am very happy that nowadays our youth do not have to experience capitalist exploitation, fascism and war personally and can grow up in security.

Visitors to the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students in 1973 in our capital, Berlin, were able to convince themselves of youth's patriotic and at the same time internationalist attitude and of the importance they attach to anti-imperialist solidarity. As president of the National Festival Committee of the GDR I took an active part in the organisation of the gathering. More than 25,000 delegates from 140 countries came to us. They represented 1,700 international, regional and national youth organisations. Together with them more than 500,000 FDJ members and Thälmann Pioneers from the GDR enjoyed a colourful programme.

The opening ceremony itself marked an unforgettable highlight. Together with tens of thousands of boys and girls I watched the entrance of the festival delegations into the stadium of the world youth. My thoughts went back to the 3rd World Festival in 1951 which had also been held in this stadium. How much our country had changed since then!

At that time our republic had only just embarked on its path. Now the delegates of world youth were coming to a flourishing country, a sovereign state that was respected worldwide, where socialism had been irrevocably victorious. Our capital, Berlin, had long been resurrected from the ashes thanks to the indefatigable energies of its inhabitants and had become a

modern socialist metropolis. Many FDJ members who had participated in the organisation of the 3rd festival, now outstanding workers, party activists, members of parliament, government ministers, generals, scientists or general directors, welcomed the representatives of world youth.

On the afternoon of 3 August 1973 I went with other members of the party leadership to Alexanderplatz in the centre of our capital where the pulse of the World Festival was to be felt most. In no time a cluster of young people had gathered around us. We were cordially drawn into the goings-on and the conversations. Humorous remarks were being exchanged, songs intoned, and we almost lost our ability to decide which direction to follow. Finally we reached the solidarity centre near the TV tower. A tiny, fragile Vietnamese girl stood in front of me. Long black plaits hung down over her shoulders. She was Vo Thi Lien, the only survivor of the My Lai massacre. She thanked us for the great solidarity shown by our republic with the liberation struggle of her people. A little later I was able to convey to the ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the resolution of our party and state leadership that credits extended in past years to his country were to be considered as non-repayable aid.

The 10th World Festival became a passionate manifestation by the delegates of world youth for anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship. It turned into an unmistakable commitment of the young generation of the whole world to peace, security and cooperation between nations, a demonstration of its unshakable will for social progress and active solidarity. It proved at the same time what great respect our youth had won from the youth of the world.

I have already written about my activity as chairman of the commission for the preparation of a new programme for the SED. In this connection I also occupied myself intensively with theoretical questions of youth policy. The time was approaching to make communist education its basic principle. We based ourselves on the recognition that a close connection exists between the two phases in the formation of communist society, i.e. between socialism and communism proper. By developing our advanced socialist society still further we create at the same time the preconditions for a gradual transition to communism. The education of the young in the spirit of communist ideals therefore takes on increased significance.

In my experience the example of well-tried communists is of inestimable value for the young. I am therefore gladdened time and again by how members of the FDJ and the Ernst Thälmann Pioneer Organisation endeavor

our to work, learn and live in their spirit. I encourage them to follow the example of Ernst Thälmann. He loved his people and his country, was an ardent internationalist, a friend of the Soviet Union. He had devoted his whole life to the highest values of mankind, the liberation of the working class from exploitation and oppression, to the victory of socialism and communism.

I impressed this also on our youngest ones, the Thälmann Pioneers, when I handed them their first red scarves on 10 December 1973. The red scarf is part of the flag of the working class. Many veterans of the workers' movement wore it in their childhood. It linked them with their hope for a better future under socialism and in peace. We gave the children the red scarf with the conviction that they would continue the tradition of the German and international workers' movement, of the Young Communist League and the communist children's movement.

When I spend time in the company of our Pioneers the truth of the saying that socialism knows only one privileged group—children—often occurs to me. This is indeed the case. Never in German history has there been a young generation that could grow up in such security as ours does. What we Red Young Pioneers had dreamt of in the Weimar Republic has become reality in the GDR. The care of society is for the children, for the young.

The programme of our party includes the development of communist convictions and attitudes in the whole coming generation. It has been declared the duty of all communists to feel especially responsible for this. Certainly, the communist education of the young is not a new task. We fought for it way back in the KJVD. The FDJ took it up too, right from the beginning. Time and again the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels was discussed, as were Lenin's speech at the 3rd Komsomol Congress, Mikhail Kalinin's essay on communist education and Nikolai Ostrovski's book *How the Steel Was Tempered*. Now a generation is growing up in our country which is called upon not only to shape an advanced socialist society but also to commence the construction of the material and technological basis for communism. This will demand much of it. The requirements of the future will provide the yardstick of its fulfilment.

I always consult the classical authors of Marxism-Leninism when I have to deal with conceptual questions of youth work. The writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin are the scientific foundation on which the well-trying and successful youth policy of our party rests. When I advise the young to absorb Marxism-Leninism I am thinking of my own experience. In order to take

their place in socialist society, in order to fight always on the right side of the barricades, the young need the scientific viewpoint of the working class.

Lenin aptly remarked that knowledge of communism derived from books is not worth a farthing without work and struggle. Our party adheres to the principle that the young can develop successfully only if they meet with trust and are given responsibility. Whatever problem may have to be solved in our society, we always link it with the life, the learning and the work of the young generation. For this reason I keep insisting that the young be given the opportunity to employ their urge for action and that the party draw on the great social potential of the socialist youth organisation.

The history of the GDR would be unthinkable without the FDJ. Many communists who are nowadays serving in all fields of our society had their first revolutionary baptism of fire in the ranks of the youth organisation. The first steps in political activity deeply influence a person's path through life. All our experience in youth policy tells us that only a unified socialist youth organisation is capable of representing the basic interests of boys and girls, answering the question of the purpose of life convincingly, and organising the struggle of the young for peace, socialism, friendship and anti-imperialist solidarity successfully. From the day of its foundation the FDJ has stood faithfully by our party. It has made an outstanding contribution to the strengthening and protection of our state at key points of socialist development.

Of course, success in the development of the FDJ did not materialise out of nothing. From my time as chairman of the FDJ I know very well how important political leadership and ideological support of the youth organisation by members of the party is at all levels. I have therefore always set great store by granting every assistance to the FDJ. Wherever possible I have conferred with activists of the youth organisation. Valuable impulses arise from discussions with the Secretariat of the FDJ Central Council. The latter is now led by Egon Krenz who as a candidate of the Politbureau works closely with me in the party leadership as well. I generally seek every opportunity to meet FDJ members and to talk to them. I could not imagine my work without encounters with the young. As I have seen Ernst Thälmann, Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht do, I often attend functions of the youth organisation in order to explain the party's policy to the young.

The relationship between party and youth organisation is based on trust and comradely collaboration for a common cause. It is an important success

for our youth policy that the FDJ considers itself a helper and a reserve force of the SED and that it has declared our party's programme the foundation of its activity. Understandably we view this development with great pleasure because our party has always drawn its new members from the youth organisation. The political maturity of the FDJ is therefore of great importance for the future of our party in this respect as well.

Our experience with regard to handing responsibility for important economic projects to the young has been good. There are at present in our country about 90,000 youth projects in all fields. In October 1974 I proposed to the youth organisation on behalf of the SED Central Committee that it take on the construction of the GDR's section of the natural gas pipeline from Orenburg to the western border of the USSR as a central youth project. This is a crucial project of the states of the socialist community for the supply of their energy requirements into the nineties. The GDR jointly with other socialist countries participated in the development of the natural gas deposits in the Orenburg region and the construction of the 2,750-kilometre stretch of pipeline.

When the CMEA adopted this task I was sure right from the outset that our youth would rise to the occasion. Today it can be said that all our expectations have been surpassed. More than 6,000 young workers and their older colleagues accomplished truly heroic deeds under exceptional geographical conditions. On 7 October 1978 the main work was completed, three months ahead of schedule. It is from such accomplishments by the young that the economic strength of our country derives.

At present members of the FDJ are engaged in the hitherto most important youth project in the history of the GDR in our socialist capital of Berlin. It covers housing construction, energy and water supply, transport and postal and telecommunications services. So far more than 12,000 young workers from all parts of the country have come to the capital to take part in this "FDJ Berlin Initiative". Together with their Berlin contemporaries and older working people they are building homes, schools, kindergartens and day nurseries, supermarkets and new factories.

Now, after the 9th Party Congress, as at all stages in the history of the GDR, the working-class youth are proving themselves to be the decisive force of our young generation. It is above all thanks to them that the contribution of the FDJ to the fulfilment and surpassing of the economic plans has taken on ever greater significance in recent years. Often young workers' collectives in factories are the front runners in the socialist com-

petition. Their motto to put in ■ good day's work every day bears witness to the energy of young people under socialism.

Our party has encouraged young workers in factories in recent years to form their own work teams. This scheme has released a great political and economic potential. At present there are 33,000 such youth teams. In their daily work they develop communist ways of thinking and attitudes. This is also the overriding impression I get when I talk to young workers, whether in factories, educational institutions or units of the armed forces. I take an interest in all facets of their lives, their activity in the workers' collectives as well as in recreation, education, leisure activities or sports. I am always pleased with their clearly drawn plans for the future. It never occurs to them that they might not get an apprenticeship or that they might even be unemployed. Life has been fundamentally changed by socialism.

What we want to achieve with our youth policy is a situation in which everyone continually increases his knowledge, broadens his outlook and fulfils his tasks in society in full awareness of his responsibility. We create the conditions under which everybody can develop his talents and abilities. In 1972 I recommended to the FDJ on behalf of our party's Central Committee to draft, jointly with the government, a new youth law. After comprehensive public discussion it was adopted by the Volkskammer in February 1974. This youth law, already the third in the history of the GDR, helps boys and girls not only to achieve success in work and study but also to spend their leisure time profitably, by engaging in wholesome recreation, playing games, and making the acquaintance of the arts. The young themselves took a dominant part in the preparation of this law. It says much for their political maturity that they actively participated in discussions at 240,000 gatherings at which more than five million citizens spoke. Nearly 5,000 proposals were submitted from which 200 amendments to the draft document resulted.

We often get reports from countries in the capitalist world about massive unemployment among the young, drug addiction, alcohol abuse and the moral decay of youth. We know no such complaints. This is not to deny that the attitude of a few young people sometimes gives us cause for concern. However, with the development of socialism we have eliminated the social cause of such phenomena once and for all. I have always been against judging people by superficialities. What is important is their basic political position, their character and attitude, their accomplishments for social progress, their whole life.

I found this view confirmed when at Whitsun 1979 more than 700,000 FDJ members and Pioneers gathered in our capital for their national youth festival. As they paraded enthusiastically in front of the podium in the great FDJ demonstration shouting: "SED—FDJ, GDR—our fatherland" everybody could see that the communist future of our republic is in good hands with these young people.

We have ■ large number of young fighters who have close ties with the party of the working class, who proudly proclaim their commitment to their socialist fatherland and act with an internationalist outlook. Our youth is a politically educated youth. It is achievement-oriented, self-confident and optimistic. It is loyal to the socialist revolution and prepared to fulfil every task which the party and government set it.

The close ties between the party and youth result from the convergence of our aims with the vital interests of the young generation. Youth is and has always been prepared to take the side of progress, and in our country this progress is embodied in the SED. The bond which has been created between SED and FDJ, between socialism and youth in three decades, from generation to generation, is indestructible.



In conversation with author Anna Seghers,
17 September 1976.

XXVIII

Socialist cultural policy

In many parts of the world orchestras, theatre companies, choirs and singing groups from our country make successful appearances. Exhibitions by our artists, books by our authors, and treasures from our cultural heritage which we have collected and cared for, attract hundreds of thousands of viewers and readers. One can certainly take this as an expression of great interest in, and appreciation for, the cultural life of the GDR. Our socialist society is economically efficient and offers material security to the people. But, as I have said, man lives not on bread alone. We understand the all-round development of the human personality and a cultured life as two inextricably connected qualities. Consequently we do not consider culture as a fancy trimming but as a basic element of social development in all fields. This is not the least of the ways in which the human face of socialism is expressed.

It is with this in mind that we carry out our cultural policy. This policy encourages writers and painters, directors and actors, composers and musicians, artists and other persons active in the cultural field to enrich the socialist culture of our country and to give it an unmistakable outline of its own. It can be said without exaggeration that the artists and writers of the GDR have opened a new chapter in the history of German literature and art.

Fundamental changes in the intellectual and cultural life of our society

have taken place over the last three decades. Deeply rooted in it are a sense of responsibility for peace and the ideas of antifascism, anti-imperialist solidarity and socialist humanism. During the seventies in particular the subjects, themes and styles of socialist realism in art have been enriched. This is a good thing. After all, everything that reflects the rich diversity of life under socialism should find its place in our art. I have therefore repeatedly emphasised that there are no taboos for the arts—as long as one stands on the firm positions of socialism.

Not a few artists of our country are guided by their striving to depict in a politically committed and artistically convincing manner the problems connected with the growth of a socialist society, the conflicts and contradictions which we have to resolve. It can only serve the purpose of social progress if problems are tackled and—as far as possible—solved. As we know, life progresses in contradictions, and it has long been proved that contradictions and their solutions are the primary sources of evolution. We always have understanding for the search after new topics and ways of presenting them because the artistic method of socialist realism is not a dogma.

All our experience shows, however, that the artist needs a firm standpoint in the middle of the life of the people, a clear position in the struggles of our time. An art which is committed to socialism fends for the interests of the masses. It shall never be satisfied with half-truths but endeavour to give expression to the development of the socialist society and its members in their interrelations and their dialectic contexts. In my contacts with artists, and in the course of frank discussions with them I have always based myself on this.

We consider such a relationship of trust between representatives of the party of the working class and the socialist state on the one hand and the cultural workers and artists on the other as an important condition for the successful development of socialist art. Artists are highly sensitive individuals. I therefore listen to them attentively and collaborate with them in a comradely and sincere manner. Firmness of principle in discussions with artists on political and ideological problems must be coupled with patience and understanding for their problems of artistic creativity.

Such has always been my experience in working together with outstanding writers and artists. I remember for instance that Brecht wrote ■ “Construction Song” (*Aufbaulied*) for the FDJ. Paul Dessau composed the music for it. In this form it became then one of the most popular songs. Its clear identification with the new society and the new state and its stirring tune made it a special favourite of the young.

It was, of course, no accident that the text has been written by Brecht, a poet known to me since the early thirties as the creator of the "Solidarity Song" and the "Song of the United Front" as well as of the play *The Mother*—adapted from Maxim Gorki's novel. He always strove to support the progressive political forces with his art.

The GDR government put the Schiffbauerdamm theatre in Berlin at Brecht's disposal in 1954. There the Berliner Ensemble achieved world fame. As an internationally known playwright and theatre director he was thus given new scope to realise his ideas. The deeply political nature of his work, his ties with the working class and with socialism, and his artistic mastery made him always an outstanding exponent of socialist realism for me. When we celebrated the 80th anniversary of his birth in 1978 with a great number of artistic and other events it gave me particular satisfaction that we made of his and his wife's home—she was Helene Weigel, the well-known actress—the Brecht Centre and thus gave expression to our close relationship with these great artists. At the opening of the Brecht Centre I could gather from my conversation with the poet's daughter, Barbara Schall-Brecht, with the actor Ekkehard Schall, the director Manfred Wekwerth, the well-known singer and actress Gisela May and other members of the Berliner Ensemble that they were continuing the work of their mentor in his spirit and that they were enriching it further with their own work.

At the presidium of the League of Culture to which I belonged as chairman of the FDJ I also frequently met Johannes R. Becher. In his youth as an expressionist poet he rebelled against the class of his bourgeois origin and later became a faithful comrade-in-arms of the working class. Becher had founded the League of Culture for the Democratic Renewal of Germany in Berlin after the Second World War on 3 July 1945, rallying representatives of the democratic intelligentsia. This poet also wrote the text of the GDR's national anthem, the opening words of which aptly describe our difficult beginnings ("From the ruins newly risen, to the future turned we stand") and to which Hanns Eisler wrote the music. Becher was also our first minister of culture. His activity is an example of how artists in the GDR participated directly in running the affairs of the state. We have always made a point of giving social responsibility to artists and writers and of awakening and deepening their understanding for the concrete circumstances of our struggle, for the new tasks of development.

Becher wrote a whole series of new songs for the FDJ, among them the "Song of the Blue Flag" which with the beautiful music by Hanns Eisler

was sung at the first national reunion of the FDJ in 1950 and a year later during the 3rd World Youth Festival by hundreds of thousands of young people. At this gathering of the world youth I also first met the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. I had the highest regard for him and the venerable Danish working-class author Martin Andersen Nexö, particularly for their persistent intercession for peace. The works of both of them are impressive examples of the close relationship between socialist art and the mass of the people and their struggles.

While there was no lack of songs the situation at the theatres gave us cause for concern. There were few challenging plays for young audiences. We therefore pondered at the FDJ's Central Council how this could be changed. In early 1950 we commissioned the dramatist Gustav von Wangenheim to write a play for the Whitsun youth gathering. We discussed the draft of the work with him and with Hans Rodenberg, who had agreed to produce the play. It was a very fruitful talk for both sides, and the result proved that an artist can be inspired by such a commission if it agrees with his own basic aims. The play *Du bist der Richtige* (You are the Right One) had considerable success. In the heroes of the drama the young people of the GDR recognised themselves.

At conferences and congresses of young artists we debated how the youth organisation could make its cultural activity more effective. Arnold Zweig wished, as he said in a letter to me, that "the rejuvenation of an old culture by a new generation and a courageous beginning for the artistic treatment of our social problems may shine forth" from the congress of young artists in April 1951. In a frank dialogue with such writers as Kurt Barthel (Kuba), Willi Bredel, Karl Grünberg, Stephan Hermlin und Jan Koplowitz a desire for new books was expressed which would reflect the new life and work. My responsibility for the publishing activities of the youth organisation also brought me frequently into contact with writers, some of whom I have maintained friendly ties with to this day.

In preparation for the 5th World Festival of Youth and Students in Warsaw in 1955, which was welcomed by such personalities as Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse and Albert Schweitzer, we held the second cultural conference of the FDJ in January 1955. At the opening I declared that the youth of our country respects and honours the cultural heritage of our people and that it sees the meaning of its life in developing all its creative abilities for peace and friendship between nations.

I took part in the writers' congresses in 1973 and 1978 as a guest. On

these occasions I was able to convince myself of the active intellectual life in our artists' federations. Of course there are differences of opinion and contrasts which sometimes come into sharp focus. After all, not all our artists are Marxists-Leninists. There is a place in the cultural life of the GDR for every artist whose work is committed to peace and humanism, to solidarity and socialism as it really exists. The example of Johannes Bobrowski has shown what a writer of Christian persuasion can accomplish under these auspices.

A few artists have not come with us along the difficult and sometimes very rocky path. They shrank from the "toils of the plains" about which Brecht had already spoken at an early date. In my opinion they thus forsook their ethos as artists. In the class struggle one has to make up one's mind: the revolutionary movement here, reaction there; socialism here, capitalism there. There is no third way. If one tries to stay on the fence art is the victim.

Every time I look around me at writers' congresses, central art exhibitions at Dresden or at the Academy of Arts I feel proud of the many comrades-in-arms we have found among the artists whose works also represent our country far beyond its borders. I have shaken hands with Ernst Busch, the bard of the revolutionary workers' movement and sat beside Vieth von Golssenau, the scion of an aristocratic family who became the world-renowned communist writer Ludwig Renn and who took part in the freedom fight of the Spanish people as an officer in the International Brigades. I have seen the venerable head of our Anna Seghers, and seen beside her the former electrician Hermann Kant who has now become the successor of the grand old lady as president of the writers' federation. Willi Sitte has explained to me his paintings, which are dedicated to the ruling working class of the GDR, and the unmistakable militant sculptures of Fritz Cremer. Konrad Wolf, president of the Academy of Arts, Michael Tschesno-Hell and the Thorndikes showed their films. I always enjoy listening to the singing of Peter Schreier or Theo Adam whose voices have thrilled audiences in the opera houses and concert halls of many countries.

I was gladdened when Paul Dessau handed me the manuscript of his composition for Bertolt Brecht's "Children's Request" from the "Herrenburger Bericht". Both of them had dedicated this song to the FDJ on the occasion of the 3rd World Festival of Youth and Students in August 1951. Paul Dessau gave me this valuable present in remembrance of our collaboration in 1951 and assured me that his work had received a great

impulse from the resolutions of the 8th Party Congress. From then on he always sent me his latest compositions. In this way I received from Paul Dessau his Choral Music No. 5 for mixed choir, bass, solo and large orchestra dedicated to the 9th Party Congress of the SED.

I consider it a great achievement of our socialist culture that there has been no break in this chain and that younger writers and artists are continuing the work of the older generation with accomplished books, paintings, films, theatre productions and concerts, symphonies and songs.

It is part of the relationship of trust with artists and writers that one should take an interest in the material conditions under which they work. Our socialist society has created the institutions which artists need for their responsible work. We have, of course, to consider our economic possibilities, we cannot fulfil all wishes but on an international scale we look pretty good in this field. This is also true of the encouragement given to young artists.

During the seventies the Politbureau of our party and the Council of Ministers of the GDR adopted further measures for the improvement of living and working conditions of artists. This concerned above all the encouragement of talent, care in old age and illness, and the allocation of homes and work space, holiday places and study tours. The Academy of Arts was given a new home at the previous meeting place of our supreme representative body in Berlin's Hermann Matern Strasse. And when I met members of the presidium of the writers' federation during the preparations for the 8th Party Congress, although we talked primarily about art and politics, we also spoke of the material aspects of book production. The one cannot be separated from the other. Economy and culture belong together. The efficiency of our economy is also crucial for the development of socialist culture.

In my youth I had experienced how difficult it is for a working-class boy to gain access to the treasures of culture and art. The slender purse of my parents set limits, and in elementary school we learned only the most essential things. Only in the Young Spartacus League and in the KJVD could I get more acquainted with some of the treasures of culture and art. But that was not easy. By contrast, in our state we have eliminated the monopoly of education and give all children the knowledge which enables them to live a cultured life. Socialist society continually creates constantly improved conditions for all citizens under which they can use their rights and freedoms for the benefit of the people and realise their full potential. To augment the material and intellectual stock of socialist culture in a

comprehensive manner is a declared aim of the SED's programme. It is our experience that the development of socialism and communism requires both an adequate material and technological basis and a high level of culture, as well as of education, social consciousness and inner maturity.

We therefore consider cultural policy as part of the overall policy for the further development of socialism in our country. We continue the tradition of Ernst Thälmann's KPD which always looked upon the problems of intellectual and cultural life as key issues of the daily struggle of the working class, the struggle for political power and for the construction of a new society. This corresponds to my own experience in life. In the struggle against exploitation and against the danger of fascism, which threatens all the values of life and culture, we drew confidence in our victory from the epoch-making teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. But we also experienced the invigorating and enriching power of art and literature. From the life and struggle of the working class arose the fundamental realisation that art may also be used as a weapon, as Friedrich Wolf once expressed it.

I have happy memories of the club-nights and social get-togethers in the circles of the workers' youth which were organised by the KJVD, the seriousness with which we approached the treasures of art, the joy and wistfulness with which we sang our beautiful German folks songs. Thus, gradually, together with the respect for the great achievements of culture and with the endeavour to absorb them there grew up a sense of responsibility for their safeguarding, so that sometime in a socialist world freed from exploitation they could attain their full bloom.

I am firmly convinced that one cannot really be a communist without respect for the creative achievements of the people and the works of its great poets and thinkers. Lenin's words, which he addressed to the young generation of his country at the 3rd congress of the Young Communist League in 1920, are distinctly engraved on my mind: "One can only become a communist if one's mind absorbs all the treasures that mankind has unearthed." The example of the socialist development in the Soviet Union made me understand better and better that the revolutionary renewal of the whole life of society for which we fought had to be based on the broad foundation of the previous achievements of human culture and that it was necessary to give all people access to them. The preservation of the humanist cultural heritage of our own people and of mankind and the continuation of everything from the past that points to the future: these are part and parcel of the well-tried principles of our state's cultural policy.

The potentially enormous mobilising and educative effect of art and literature was brought home to me when after the liberation of the German people from Nazi rule we faced the difficult task of overcoming the confusion in the heads of millions of people. Works of art helped greatly to advance the ideas of human dignity and peace, of democracy and socialism.

This was done also with a view to rediscovering the genuine and truly human values which our nation had produced in its rich cultural past and which had been shamefully suppressed or falsified by the Nazi tyranny. We experienced how classical works of German cultural tradition like Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, Goethe's *Faust* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony were received by our people and its youth as messages of humanism and social responsibility and combined with our own struggle for a new society. Together with the works of the antifascist German artists and the testimonies of the progressive spirit in other nations this heritage contributed to the overcoming of hatred for other nations and contempt for other human beings. During my activity as chairman of the FDJ I intensely experienced such effects of the humanist cultural heritage in the process of acute intellectual and social changes and was able to contribute my share to them. At countless club-nights of our organisation young people felt for the first time the moving power of poetry such as that of Heinrich Heine, heard the voice of literature that had been outlawed in Nazi Germany. I remember vividly the great official tributes to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven and Friedrich Schiller. With festive events which brought together young people from all parts of our country the FDJ started those commemorative feasts which have marked the cultural history of the GDR. In recent years we have continued this development by paying tribute to Ludwig van Beethoven, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Albert Einstein and other important representatives of the humanist heritage of mankind. The annual Händel and Shakespeare festivals have a firm place in the cultural life of our country.

However, I also remember what reaction the works of Soviet art and literature evoked among many young people after 1945. Educated in the spirit of anti-communism and anti-Sovietism they came to know and appreciate for the first time books which opened up a new world for them. Books from the country of Lenin, including works mentioned already—I am thinking of the works of Vladimir Mayakovski, Alexander Fadeyev's *The Young Guard*, Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* and Valentin Katayev's *Lonely White Sail*—had a strong effect in the conflict-ridden process of intellectual

enlightenment. With them and with progressive literature and art from other countries the respect for the cultural achievements of other nations grew and nationalist prejudices were overcome.

Nowadays the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, humanism and peace are decisive for the thinking and the attitudes of the citizens of our workers' and peasants' state. Friendship with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, as well as international solidarity with all forces in the world which fight for peace, freedom, democracy and social progress, has for millions of people become a feature of everyday life in our country not least with the help of art and literature.

In our country culture is not a matter for a small élite but is there for the mass of the working people. This is the basic principle of all our work and one which we have observed from the outset. For the first time social conditions have been created for the emergence of a truly popular culture which is borne by the most progressive force in society, the working class.

It was of great significance when in 1959 a youth team at the electro-chemical combine of Bitterfeld appealed to all production collectives to work, learn and live in a socialist manner. At the time many thought this would be a shortlived campaign. But with encouragement from our party, the trade unions and the youth organisation, it became a mass movement in which millions of working people take part within their collectives.

The socialist way of working, learning and living will continue to determine the socialist personality in future. It is not just art—and not even principally art—that makes a life cultured. Basically it is the sum total of conditions which offer either a narrow or a wide field for creativity, for the education and application of the talents and abilities of the people. Therefore our party opts for a broad view of culture. It includes the spreading of the scientific philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, civilised conditions of work, a decent environment as well as civilised standards of behaviour, the cultivation and dissemination of the humanist cultural heritage, socialist-realist art and access to the treasures of world culture. I am of the opinion that only this kind of approach can stand up to the demands which our era makes upon us.

During my travels to countries near and far, during my sojourns in various continents, I have often felt how much humanist art and culture can bring nations closer together. Wherever I had an opportunity I have noted with great interest what a vivid impression of and testimony to the way of life and the deepest yearnings of peoples art can convey.

Wherever I have encountered the culture and art of other nations, whether in the shape of contemporary creations or the heritage of world culture, my respect for their accomplishments, my belief in the creativity of the working people has been deepened. Everywhere they manifest in art their love of life, their great and small joys, their sorrows and needs, and their indomitable will for conditions worthy of human beings.

I know from many personal experiences of art and culture in the Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries what an important part the cultures of our countries play in promoting togetherness, friendship and the ability to think in terms of the whole community. I have gazed with admiration at India's cultural monuments, witnessed the dances of African nations, listened to the ancient melodies and rhythms of their songs which announce the awakening to a new life. Twice during the last thirty years I have been fortunate enough to experience and help organise a rendezvous of the art of nations in the songs and games of world youth in the GDR's capital. How many times in my life, in how many different places among working people from different nations have I joined in my own language in a song which the workers of all countries sing in their language and which has become the expression of their historical movement: the "Internationale"!

In the worldwide struggle of our era for a peaceful and socially just world the art and culture of the world's nations are an indispensable motive force the absence of which would be unthinkable. The exchange of progressive humanist cultural values serves mutual enrichment and understanding between nations, bringing new colours and tones into their lives.

Our socialist national culture in the GDR is open to everything good and valuable that comes its way. We receive it with an open mind. By the same token we stand with our culture for everything that will pave the way of mankind into the future.



**Going to the polls in Berlin
during the municipal elections, 20 May 1979
(From l. to r.: Erich Honecker, Margot Honecker,
Friedrich Ebert, Willi Stoph and Horst Sindermann).**

XXIX

Our democracy

Much of what I have written so far already answers the question of what socialist democracy is. Nevertheless I should like to add a few reflections on it. This above all because bourgeois mass media never miss an opportunity of denouncing the GDR and all socialist states as “antidemocratic” and “totalitarian” and depict capitalist society as the incarnation of democracy. They identify the bourgeois order of things with democracy pure and simple and make it the yardstick of all things.

Our people's bitter experience of Nazism confirmed us in the knowledge, which we owed not only to the period 1933-45, that truly democratic conditions were unthinkable under the rule of monopoly capitalism. I would just recall that the Nazi régime grew out of the bourgeois parliamentary democracy of Weimar. Certainly, the Weimar Republic represented some progress as compared to the Kaiser's Germany. But the continuation of the old ownership and power structures was the cause of its demise. It permitted the most extreme reactionaries to undermine the Weimar democracy almost unhindered and finally to destroy it completely.

I do not, of course, overlook the fact that bourgeois democracy does offer certain opportunities to the working class and to other working people to win certain demands and to articulate their dissatisfaction with activities

hostile to democracy and with anti-social measures by the bourgeois government. This, however, goes only as far as the working class is able to compel more democratic rights and liberties. We Marxist-Leninists do not ignore either the advantages which bourgeois parliamentary democracy offers compared with other forms of rule, whether fascist, militarist or other reactionary dictatorships. They consist in the fact that workers and other working people can defend their vital interests and plead in conditions of legality for peace, democracy and material security on the basis of a bourgeois order of things—even though only against strong resistance. All this, of course, does not change the fact that bourgeois democracy benefits the monopoly bourgeoisie in the end. Issues of democracy are closely tied up with the issue of state power. Whoever holds power in a state determines the nature of that state, and the latter in turn tells about the nature of democracy.

The GDR is a socialist state which differs fundamentally from all previous German state entities. From the beginning big business, bankers and big estate owners, fascists, militarists and revanchists were excluded from power. What we wanted and achieved was to include the whole working population in the discussion and resolution of fundamental questions of socialist development, to have them take part directly in the direction of public and economic affairs, education and culture, in mastering emerging problems and in controlling the execution of joint resolutions.

We took this road to socialist democracy with utter determination, and we shall continue on it. Our democracy permeates all fields of life. I may in this context point to the land reform, school reform and the plebiscite on the expropriation of Nazi and war criminals in 1945/46. I would also refer to the public discussions about our constitution and other fundamental laws. This shows that democracy is at home in all areas of our society.

We consider its crucial field to be material production. We have done everything to make sure that real political power is exercised by those who create the wealth of society and the foundations of a secure future. They are the workers, the cooperative farmers, the members of the intelligentsia and the other working people. It is precisely in this respect that our socialist democracy distinguishes itself from bourgeois capitalist democracy which as we all know ends at the factory gate. Euphemistic phrases about industrial democracy alter nothing in this regard.

In promoting democratic participation by all working people our party and the mass organisations of the working class, above all the trade unions,

play a large part. I remember the 8th congress of the FDGB from 26 to 30 June 1972 in Berlin. I conveyed the thanks of the SED Central Committee for the work of the many unpaid trade union activists, and for the accomplishments of all trade union members. My statement that socialism can only be built with strong and active trade unions met with undivided approval.

I also gladly accepted the invitation to the 9th FDGB congress which was held in Berlin from 15 to 19 May 1977. This congress was marked by a marvellous atmosphere. It demonstrated the unity and cohesion of the trade unions and their enhanced vigour. The 2,967 delegates represented 8.3 million members from 16 industrial and other trade unions affiliated to the FDGB. We noticed with pleasure that the majority of participants in the congress were women. The report and discussion conveyed an impressive picture of the multifaceted and successful activity of the trade unions. It showed how the trade unions proved themselves as schools of socialism and communism, as representatives of the interests of the working people in the formation of a developed socialist society.

The delegates debated new problems of our social development in a very constructive manner, especially the further implementation of our central policy. It opened up new dimensions for the trade unions to represent the interests of the working people. The 9th congress of the FDGB unanimously supported the resolutions of the 9th Congress of the SED. I emphasise this not least because it shows the largest class organisation thus identifying itself with a policy that aims at rapidly increasing the GDR's economic potential. Many trade unionists gave as their reason that this approach would determine and expand the scope of our social policy.

This was confirmed in our practical life. Millions of workers and other working people have subscribed to it. The democratic discussion of our five-year plans and the annual economic plans in work teams, factories and combines bears witness to this. The plan debates are organised by the trade unions. It is no accident that in 1979 the discussion about the draft of the 1980 economic plan was closely connected with the trade union elections.

In more than 390,000 election meetings fundamental issues of the GDR's further economic development were the subject of creative discussions. About seven and a half million people took part in these meetings, i.e. roughly 86 per cent of all FDGB members. About two million trade unionists spoke in the discussions. They gave many useful comments, did not hold back on critical remarks and submitted their proposals for a more effective

form of the developed socialist society in the GDR. Nearly three quarters of these proposals and comments were guided by the desire to increase the economic potential of our country. It has long been a matter of course for many working people to make their personal contribution publicly known.

The trade unions do not only organise plan discussions, but also the participation of the working people in the socialist competition for the realisation of our economic plans. This includes continual further improvement of working and living conditions. I know from many talks with working people that the socialist competition stimulates creative work. It enhances every man's desire for a meaningful, successful and acknowledged activity within the circle of his colleagues at work. At the same time it gives broad scope to the creative initiative of the working people, to their claim to innovation and inventiveness.

Where else do the motives for such actions lie than in people's confidence that in this way they are taking a decisive part in the exercise of power and having their say about whether their lives today are to be lived in peace and security, and whether their life tomorrow is going to be better? The massive participation in plan discussions and in the competition expresses ■ committed democratic attitude to society. It may be said that democracy in our country is practised every day and every hour.

Because trade unions have such great importance they were given far-reaching rights in our Constitution of October 1974. The FDGB as the largest mass organisation of the working people was guaranteed the constitutional right to play an active part in the formation of our socialist legal system. It has the privilege of initiating legislation and exerting control over the safeguarding of legally guaranteed rights of the working people.

The FDGB makes effective use of this. The already mentioned 9th FDGB congress, for example, submitted the proposal for a new labour code for the GDR to the Volkskammer. When the Chairman of the FDGB, Harry Tisch, a member of the SED Politbureau, introduced the draft law in our supreme representative assembly he was able to prove that the document bore the endorsement of the workers and represented their interests. Nearly six million working people had taken part in the public discussion of the draft which had been organised by the trade unions. A total of 147,806 proposals, comments and queries were received, which included 39,000 suggested changes and amendments. All these proposals were carefully examined and evaluated. They led to 90 changes of content and 144 editorial

amendments. The working people of the GDR thus wrote their own labour code.

The GDR's civil code of 19 June 1975 is of great importance for the strengthening of our socialist legal system. Many citizens, understandably, took an interest in its drafting. After all, it concerned their rights and duties. Numerous discussions were held on the subject. Some of them were motivated by the fact that the old civil code was the last still valid law from the era of capitalist legislation. Social development had long since superseded it. At more than 8,500 rallies in which 260,000 citizens took part the perfection of socialist civil law was debated. More than 4,000 proposals and comments led to 260 changes and amendments.

Such active participation by the working people in legislation, such co-determination in all essential decisions on economic and social policy, prove strikingly the new quality of socialist democracy. It cannot be understood as a mere continuation or expansion of bourgeois democracy. More bourgeois democratic rights and liberties by no means lead automatically to socialist democracy. For the latter fundamentally different conditions are required.

Socialist democracy has developed completely new and specific forms and traditions. In the final analysis they are all rooted in the conviction that the fundamental interests of the classes and sections of the population involved in the construction of socialist society coincide with the interests of the working class as the main force of social progress.

Lenin called it the greatest nonsense to assume that the most radical revolution in the history of mankind, in which for the first time in the world power was passing from the exploiting minority to the exploited majority, could take place within the framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy without the creation of new forms of democracy, of new institutions which constitute the new conditions for their application. He was absolutely right in this. Formal comparisons between bourgeois and socialist democracy are therefore absurd.

The Constitution of the GDR makes the people sovereign in the socialist state. I consider this a high democratic obligation. Therefore I am ceaselessly concerned, as a party activist, member of the Volkskammer and chairman of the Council of State, to do everything necessary to ensure that the people can actually make effective use at any time of the power given to them. The elected representative assemblies in rural communities, towns, districts and counties as well as the Volkskammer offer in themselves a safe guarantee

for this on account of their social composition. Out of the 201,570 deputies to local assemblies who were elected on 20 May 1979 144,802, or 71.8 per cent, belong by social background to the working class, while 44,284 deputies, or 21.9 per cent, are members of agricultural, horticultural or fishermen's cooperatives. 70,431 deputies, i. e. 34.9 per cent, have graduated from university or technical training colleges. There are 72,301 female deputies (35.9 per cent) and 29,592 young deputies between the age of 18 and 25 (14.7 per cent). Among the members of the Volkskammer, 373 are blue or white-collar workers by social background; 53 are members of agricultural production cooperatives, individual working peasants, gardeners or fishermen; 28 are members of the intelligentsia; 31 are self-employed craftsmen; eight are tradesmen and self-employed persons; and seven come from other professions.

Besides the SED, the other parties of the Democratic Bloc—the Democratic Farmers' Party, the Christian Democratic Union, the Liberal Democratic Party and the National Democratic Party—are represented in all assemblies by elected representatives. This is also true for the democratic mass organisations of our country—the trade unions, the socialist youth organisation, the Women's Democratic Federation and the League of Culture.

By their activity the representative assemblies realise the unity of the making, execution and control of decisions. They leave neither the preparation nor the execution of laws and resolutions to the state administration but ensure the involvement of the citizens and the agencies of the state apparatus. All these factors show that our socialist representative assemblies are public bodies which draft laws and themselves examine the results of the latter's implementation. They are accountable to the voters.

In our country the voters and their working collectives as well as the parties and mass organisations can demand in agreement with the National Council and the local committees of the National Front that a deputy be removed if he grossly abuses the trust bestowed on him by the working people. The representative assembly in question then decides on removal.

Close contact with the mass of the people is not only incumbent upon deputies during election campaigns. As I have written already, I often take advantage of visits to towns and rural communities in order to keep myself up to date on the supply situation, public transport and public services. I look at shop displays, take an interest in the state of repair of streets and houses and many other things. Before meeting representatives of local party

organisations I gather a lot of impressions which facilitate finding solutions to many a problem.

Elected representatives of the people in our country are duty bound to follow up all concerns, criticisms, complaints and proposals by the population and to examine them conscientiously. Every citizen has the right to turn to the representative assemblies and government and economic agencies, orally or in writing. The social organisations also have this right. It is laid down by law that every citizen can demand an answer stating reasons, and that petitions must be answered within four weeks. This means no little work for our deputies and state officials. The interests of the people are further attended to by state agencies and social institutions which give broad scope for the involvement of the general public.

By comparison to our beginnings in 1945 the collaboration of citizens in all fields has increased considerably, be it in lay courts, i. e. arbitration and disputes commissions or as lay magistrates in regional and high courts, as members of class parent groups and parent-teacher associations, in commissions of our representative assemblies or in committees of the National Front, in advisory councils of the nationally owned and co-operative trade organisations, in commissions of the workers' and peasants' inspectorates or the people's control committees. The number of citizens who participate in the activities of such institutions voluntarily outside their regular working hours runs into the hundreds of thousands. And it still increases year after year.

From this it can be seen that the citizens make use in many different ways of the opportunities for collaborating, for participating in planning and public affairs according to their interests, inclinations and desires. At the same time this makes it clear that socialist democracy is not limited to elections even though elections are, of course, highlights of national life in a socialist country. Socialist democracy demands political and social activity of everybody and promotes active behaviour on the part of everybody. We always keep the further enhancement of socialist democracy in view, indeed it is a consideration that even determines the basic direction of our state's development.

Another proof for me of the close ties between party and people as well as an important source of information are the letters in which factory collectives and individual working people express themselves on political issues, on the social development in our country and on personal matters. During the past year some 15,000 citizens from all sections of the population

have written to me. Their proposals often have a great economic impact. After all they contain pointers to reserves which we can use for a faster growth of our economy. Not infrequently citizens complain about bureaucratic behaviour by state agencies or about their personal problems not being given due attention. In such cases we furnish a remedy.

Frequently I receive letters with gratifying contents. For instance, workers from the petrochemical combine of Schwedt who had just returned with their families aboard our holiday ship *Völkerfreundschaft* from a trip to Leningrad, Riga and Tallinn wrote about their eventful holiday in a friendly country. They had been given this trip by their factory as a reward for good performance. Now, as they emphasised, they wanted to respond with new work accomplishments.

Most letters show that the citizens of our country know the laws of our country well and feel themselves personally committed to their implementation. Not infrequently the letter writers declare their willingness to help in solving the problems they bring up. For rapid and thorough attention to the concerns expressed in these letters I consult with representatives of the organisations involved, with ministers, general managers of large combines or the chairmen of trade unions, of the Women's Democratic Federation, the socialist youth organisation or the other democratic parties.

Year after year more citizens turn to me with their concerns. We insist that none of the problems which concern people be underestimated or disregarded. When a delegation of workers from the Ernst Thälmann heavy engineering plant in Magdeburg visited me at the house of the SED Central Committee in Berlin I learned from my talk with steelmoulder Josef Klemm and the woman worker Helga Scholz that the employees were not being given a fair share in the distribution of new homes. But it is quite specifically the workers in both industry and agriculture who are meant to profit from the assets and social improvements they have created. The problem brought up by the Magdeburg workers—and by workers from other areas—was reason enough to introduce general changes. We took steps to involve the large factories themselves more in the construction of homes and, in rural areas, to improve the housing conditions of cooperative farmers and agricultural workers considerably. We also decided that 60 per cent of the new homes were to be given to workers and large families.

The political course of the SED's 8th Party Congress—fulfilment and over-fulfilment of the five-year plan for 1971-75 had far-reaching positive

effects which confirmed the correctness of our thinking and planning in daily life. I therefore proposed in 1974 on behalf of the SED Central Committee to amend the Constitution of the GDR. It had to be brought into line with the socio-economic and political standard of development and the social relations in our country. It documents the indestructible fraternal alliance of the GDR and the USSR, the firm rooting of the first German workers' and peasants' state in the socialist community of states. At the same time it takes into account that the GDR has been recognised by nearly all countries in terms of international law and that it has become a full member of the United Nations. On the basis of a proposal by the parliamentary group of my party the Volkskammer passed a law which enacted the amended Constitution on 7 October 1974, the 25th anniversary of the GDR.

Having been a member of our people's supreme representative assembly since 1949 and a member of the Council of State since 1971 I was unanimously elected chairman of the Council of State of the GDR on 29 October 1976 by the members of all parliamentary groups of the Volkskammer upon a proposal by the SED's ZK in concordance with the other parties and mass organisations of the Democratic Bloc. It was a moving moment for me. Being entrusted with the highest state office of the GDR meant to me the honourable commitment to continue to devote all my strength to the well-being of our people.

As chairman it is my duty to direct the entire activity of the Council of State, to appoint and recall the diplomatic representatives of our country in other countries, to receive the credentials of representatives of other states and to receive them on their valedictory calls. It is also part of the duties of the chairman of the Council of State to meet more frequently than before leaders and politicians from other states. I make use of these opportunities to promote our policy of peace and security, friendship between nations and peaceful coexistence.

Also in the Council of State, which performs the tasks entrusted to it by the Constitution and the laws of the Volkskammer while contributing to the strengthening of the international position of our workers' and peasants' state and to enhancing the climate of trust between the state and its citizens, I maintain a close and friendly relationship with the representatives of other parties and mass organisations. It is an expression of this relationship of trust which has grown up over the decades that I meet representatives of the member parties of the Democratic Bloc and the National Front at regular intervals. I always invite the president of the National Council of the

National Front to these meetings. In these discussions we agree on fundamental questions of the GDR's domestic and foreign policy and on joint solutions to emerging problems.

In our state everybody is called upon to participate in the development of our advanced socialist society. Nobody is left out, all are needed. This, however, also involves—and the overwhelming majority of our people are united in this conviction—the protection of our democracy against forces which try to harm or even destroy it. This is guaranteed by the community of all the social forces united in the National Front, which has taken shape over the past thirty years. It will continue to be guaranteed in future.



Friendly meeting of leaders of Communist and workers' parties
of socialist countries in the Crimea, July 1973.
(From r. to l.: Yumjaagyn Tsendenbal, Erich Honecker, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev,
Gustav Husak, Janos Kadar,
Edward Gierek, Nicolae Ceausescu, and Todor Zhivkov).

XXX

Encounters in the Crimea

Everyone likes to have the feeling of having reliable friends with whom one can discuss even the most difficult problems openly, with whom one can share, so to speak, one's joys and sorrows, and from whom one can expect understanding for everything that is on one's mind. This kind of mutual friendship helps one to carry on. To strive for it is always worthwhile. The same is no less true for nations and states and for the relationships between them. For our people and our GDR it is a great good fortune to know we have such friends by our side.

For over thirty years our friendship with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries has been just this kind of friendship. It has turned out to be one of our greatest achievements. The GDR has irrevocably taken its place in the community of socialist states.

Encounters with the leaders of the countries allied with us—whether in Berlin, Moscow, in the capital of another socialist state or in some other place—always constitute special high points in our relations. I am sure my friends and comrades-in-arms feel the same. These encounters are a life-giving elixir of a collaboration that is growing ever closer.

Among such encounters the friendly meetings with Leonid Brezhnev, which since 1971 have taken place every summer in the Crimea, occupy an

outstanding place. These meetings, held in a cordial, frank and productive atmosphere, are marked by the community of our interests, opinions and aims. They encourage new efforts for the well-being of our peoples and their bright future, for the cause of peace and socialism.

In the early years these Crimean encounters, during which the leaders of the communist and workers' parties and the states of the socialist community discussed current problems, were of a collective nature. For some time now bilateral consultations have been held between Leonid Brezhnev and the general secretaries or first secretaries of the fraternal parties. Both forms have much to recommend them.

In the first case the most important international problems were debated in a larger circle. These meetings bore some similarity to the sessions of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation for which we come together as a rule every other year in the capital of one or other of the allied states, the venue being chosen on a rotational basis. At the bilateral meetings the discussion is understandably much more detailed. The encounters with Leonid Brezhnev always offer excellent opportunities for exchanging views and comparing notes in an exhaustive and informal manner in order to determine our further joint actions.

For representatives of socialist states having close ties with one another, and leaders of workers' parties, their political tasks alone make it imperative to have close, comradely relations. Leonid Brezhnev, this passionate fighter for peace, outstanding figure of the world communist movement and statesman, so embodies the best traditions and the noblest aims of the Soviet people that the strength of his character and his sincerity never fail to make a deep impression on those who meet him.

The first man of the world's mightiest socialist country knows no higher goal than peace. Incessantly he works for it, insistently submitting ever new proposals to make it more secure. He knows the horrors of war. He fought in the frontline for the victory of the Soviet peoples over Nazi barbarism during the Great Patriotic War. His love of peace is therefore all the more credible to everybody.

Leonid Brezhnev initiated the peace programmes of the 24th and 25th Party Congresses of the CPSU which have become household words in the whole world. With the forcefulness typical of him he fights for the peace philosophy of communism. For him the ultimate yardstick in assessing the work of any statesman is his contribution to human well-being. This is a supremely moral political attitude.

In our encounters I experienced this time and again. In conversation, Leonid Brezhnev is in the habit of paying close attention to the views of others. New questions of social development play as important a role as international political issues. He combines a justified pride in the achievements of the Soviet people in the most varied fields with a critical sense for shortcomings. He also discusses complex issues of the day in such a way that their future implications, i.e. their broader perspective becomes clear.

The community in struggle between the SED and the CPSU, the friendship between the GDR and the Soviet Union, are the crucial foundation of our successes. This relationship, which has been written into our Constitution, is the pivotal point of our policy. Our alliance makes the sovereignty and independence of the GDR—which is located on the borderline dividing socialism and imperialism in Europe, between NATO and the Warsaw Pact—unassailable.

Even those to whom the existence of our socialist German state has always been a thorn in the flesh, know this. In the past they left no stone unturned in order to wipe the socialist Germany off the map, and even though they have suffered a fiasco they still hanker after this hopeless wishful dream. It is therefore no surprise that they keep attacking the friendship between the GDR and the Soviet Union because it stands in the way of their sinister plans. Sooner or later they will have to accept that it cannot be shaken.

The economic relations between the GDR and the USSR usually play an especially important part in my talks with Leonid Brezhnev. We do about one third of our foreign trade with the Soviet Union. Conversely, the GDR is the biggest foreign trading partner of the USSR. The volume of economic, scientific and technological cooperation between our countries is growing very rapidly. It is part of our everyday relationship that our experts work together and that we exchange skilled workers and youth brigades as well as conducting joint research and development in combines and scientific centres.

As the reader knows already our manufacturing industry receives the largest part of its raw materials and fuel imports from the USSR. This is a systematically agreed-upon, stable and, from a price point of view, altogether favourable way of supplying ourselves, which is all the more important for us as we have hardly any raw materials of our own.

During the more than 50 years I have fought in the ranks of the communist movement one's relationship to the party of Lenin and with the Soviet Union has always been, in Thälmann's spirit, the decisive criterion

as to which side of the barricades one stands. During the past three decades I have done my best in order to strengthen the alliance between the GDR and the USSR in every possible way.

This alliance rests on strong pillars. First of all there are our shared aims, ideals and values, our shared socio-economic system which permits neither capitalist private ownership of the means of production or profiteering by a minority of monopolists, nor does it know unemployment or inflation. There is the political system common to both countries in which the principle of "Everything for the people, with the people, by the people" prevails and in which there is no place for racial discrimination nor contempt for other nations. There are our joint efforts to secure peace. And there are finally the common traditions of the battle for the revolutionary changing of society according to the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

I have felt this community of interests more and more strongly on each of my visits to the Soviet Union. This was also the case during my eventful trip to Magnitogorsk in April 1971. I was then a member of the SED delegation which attended the 24th Party Congress of the CPSU. When it was suggested to me that I should include the city in the Ural mountains—where Europe and Asia meet—in my travel programme I was gripped by joyful expectation. Forty years before, in 1931, I had been there for the first time as I mentioned earlier.

Seeing Magnitogorsk again as it is today moved me deeply. What we then dreamt of as an ideal for the future in our passionate discussions—a metallurgical giant without capitalists, a factory complex belonging to the workers and managed by them—had become reality. Where there had been primitive mobile homes, tents and sheds there was now the traffic of a large modern city of 340,000 inhabitants. The steel workers living there, engineers and technicians, are educated people, graduates of universities and technical training colleges. In our talks they showed interest in matters of science and technology in the GDR as well as in international affairs. Where we had once dug out foundations with hoes, shovels and spades, computers now control complicated manufacturing processes. Magnitogorsk has become the largest metallurgical combine of the Soviet Union, turning out two per cent of the whole world's steel production.

Encounters with the young generation, which is already building the combine of the future, and with older workers who still remember the young German comrades of more than 40 years ago, were particularly impressive. At a special ceremony I was presented with the badge of honour of a

“Veteran of the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine”. It was a wonderful moment. The stay in Magnitogorsk brought out the best traditions of comradeship between German and Soviet workers. It made clear an historic process of revolution.

We took a further step in the expansion of our alliance when Leonid Brezhnev and I signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on 7 October 1975 in Moscow. We concluded this historically important treaty in the certain knowledge that the indestructible fraternal bond with the Soviet Union and the firm anchoring in the socialist community are the foundation of the life of our state.

The Treaty of Friendship—actually the third after the treaties between the GDR and the USSR of September 1955 and June 1964—reflects the new internal and external conditions of socialist and communist development in our countries. It creates better preconditions for the realisation of its aims—the merger of the material and intellectual potentials of our peoples. The treaty is based on the generally recognised principles and norms of fraternal relations between socialist states, corresponds to the most vital interests of our peoples and serves at the same time the further strengthening of the socialist community of states. It lays down the principles and main tasks of our collaboration right into the next millennium and comprises all aspects of our relationship. The friendship and collaboration between our two peoples are thus elevated to a higher level.

The Treaty of Friendship makes it unmistakably clear that socialist internationalism includes strict observation of the principles of equal rights, independence and sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs as well as comradely mutual support and close cooperation in the building of socialism and communism and the safeguarding of peace. Similar treaties, based on the same principles, have been signed by myself in subsequent years with the leaders of other socialist states. They all help to strengthen the international positions of the socialist German state and to enhance its sense of responsibility for the cause of peace, democracy and socialism.

On the occasion of the conclusion of the new Friendship Treaty, Leonid Brezhnev referred to it as drawing our two states and peoples closer together. The drawing together of the socialist states and nations is a process of historic moment in which common features become more and more apparent, the elements of togetherness and similarity increase, and at the same time the national economies and national cultures flourish and develop fully. Of course, this drawing together does not happen without problems, nor

does it proceed without friction. It is necessary to proceed carefully and to take note of the historical differences between and national idiosyncrasies of the countries involved. We are agreed with the Soviet Union and the other friendly states that success will depend greatly on the joint efforts and the contribution of each participant, on how well the communist parties understand how to direct this historical development. Our party is aware of the duties resulting from this and meets them in every respect.

How big the changes over three decades—even in ways of thinking and behaving—have been, and how historically significant, even unique, the process of drawing together has been, became particularly clear after the signing of the Treaty of Friendship during my visits to Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) and other Soviet cities. It was my second encounter with the legendary city on the Volga at the gates and within the walls of which what was probably the most decisive battle of the Second World War was fought in 1942/43. As mentioned I had first visited this city in 1947 as head of a delegation of the FDJ. It was still in ruins then, but life had started to flow back into it. During my second visit in 1975 it presented itself as a modern, generously laid out, flourishing city in which one strongly feels the Soviet people's desire for peace and where the memory of the war is constantly present, especially at the once bitterly disputed Mamayev hill. Today it is a place of remembrance of unique solemnity. It testifies to the courage and the sacrifices of the Soviet peoples who won the victory over fascism and saved mankind from relapse into barbarism.

The most important lesson to be learned from the Second World War is, no doubt, to do everything to permit nations to shape their future in peace. It must nowadays be demanded of statesmen and politicians, no matter what point of view they represent, what social system they adhere to, or what ideas of the future they may have, that they concentrate their efforts consistently on securing peace and preventing a new world war.

Whether in what is now Ulyanovsk, birthplace of Lenin, or in the industrial region of Sverdlovsk in the Ural mountains which I first visited 50 years ago, or again in the capital of the Tatar autonomous Soviet socialist republic, Kazan: everywhere we went during those days in October 1975 we were witnesses to the peaceful work of a people who wants nothing more dearly than to preserve and strengthen peace in this world.

We were deeply moved by the cordiality and friendliness of the Soviet people who even in times of severe trial had always distinguished between Nazis and the German people. Our encounters were a symbol that the treaty

of 7 October 1975 is a treaty of friendship between two peoples in the truest sense of the word.

Meeting other nations of the socialist community, getting to know more closely their experiences, their successes and their problems, broadens one's horizon. Sometimes it even helps to see things in one's own country more clearly. Above all the frank exchange of opinions and comparing notes with the leaders of the allied and friendly countries, conducted in a spirit of responsibility for the future, proves extremely useful. This has become clear whenever I have met party leaders and statesmen like Edward Gierek, Gustav Husák, János Kádár, Todor Zhivkov, Fidel Castro, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Yumjaagiyn Tsedenbal, Josip Broz Tito and Le Duan. With many of them I have been on terms of friendship and comradeship for many years. Within the community of socialist countries encounters on the highest level are, of course, but one form of cooperation. Where necessary, we communicate directly or through the usual diplomatic and other channels. Rarely a week passes without my having talks with ambassadors, chiefs and members of party and government delegations, ministers, scientists or representatives of social organisations from friendly states.

All these get-togethers have become not only a fine and rich but also a necessary tradition. They are both a matter of course and yet at the same time something extraordinary. Not a few impulses evolve from them which later on find expression in agreements between the agencies of our states, in practical cooperation between our ministries, factories and social organisations, in growing travel and tourist traffic, in cultural and scientific exchanges.

The socialist countries form a community in which all members, big and small, have equal rights. Every member fulfils common as well as specific duties which reflect varying conditions and possibilities. Socialist internationalism, which rests on common ideals, ideological positions and aims, does not make the exchange of opinions, the comradely discussion of results and prospects of policy superfluous. On the contrary, it presupposes them as indispensable to our success.

The comparing of notes is—and I can say this without exaggeration from three decades of experience in the GDR—the most worthwhile investment. If experience is used properly, i. e. applied creatively to concrete conditions, this often saves substantial energy and resources. It facilitates decisions, helps in avoiding mistakes and enables the material and intellectual potential to be used to better advantage. In all our encounters it is customary to take

a critical look also at our successes so that we can draw conclusions for even more advantageous solutions.

In all my meetings with the leaders of other states of the socialist community problems of economic, scientific and technological collaboration as well as socialist economic integration occupy an important place. I have already spoken of this and need not repeat myself here.

The main concern is and remains the exchange of views on how by joint action peace can be stabilised, international détente expanded and disarmament encouraged. Understandably this applies particularly to the situation on the European continent, but it is not, of course, limited to it. There are, for instance, still areas of conflict in the Near and Middle East and in southern Africa which are fraught with serious danger. The deterioration of the international situation caused by certain imperialist forces at the beginning of the eighties reminds us that the defence and safeguarding of world peace is the problem on which the very existence of mankind depends. Its lasting solution requires courage, prudence, constructive thinking and a long breath.

Today's world is essentially different from yesterday's. With the growing strength of the socialist community, the collapse of the colonial system, and the awakening of nations to a new future, the face of the world has changed radically. The realisation that there is no reasonable alternative to the policy of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems has gained ground. This is an important starting point for socialist foreign policy on the eve of the 21st century.

In all consultations with Leonid Brezhnev and the leaders of the other socialist states the struggle for peace and the continuation of the process of détente and disarmament occupy a central position. Of course, we are guided in all this by the interests of our states and peoples. To insist on these does not, however, mean to harm other countries. International political and economic relations must be promoted for the mutual benefit of the respective partners, and a productive cooperation in the interest of peace must be developed for the good of all. The socialist states persistently plead for negotiations on an equal footing and keep constantly submitting concrete proposals, drafts of treaties and agreements.

Every nation must have the unrestricted right to decide on its social system and structure and all aspects of its interior development as a state. As communists we reject equally the export of revolution and counterrevolution. There cannot be any exception to this rule. Not least the peoples of the

emergent nations, who have only recently achieved their political independence by shaking off the colonial yoke, must have the unrestricted right to determine the political system of their choice and to decide on the use of their national wealth. Equally we support the establishment of a just and democratic international economic order.

I also have close ties with the leaders of communist and workers' parties of the non-socialist world. Our personal acquaintance in some cases goes back for decades. For example, I remember vividly the consultative meeting of delegations from 65 communist and workers' parties, which took place in Budapest in late February and early March 1968. I led the SED delegation which attended this meeting. In Budapest we debated our views on the world situation as it was then and the conclusions which the communists should draw from it. In view of the growing demands made on communists I pleaded for the immediate preparation of an international conference of communist and workers' parties. To this day I remember many talks I had during those days in Budapest with old friends with whom I had shared experiences in the international youth movement of postwar years, among them Enrico Berlinguer, today general secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Zoltán Komóczin who sadly died all too soon and was then secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and many others. But I also made many new friends in Budapest whose names are well known to many.

It was resolved at this meeting to call an international conference of the communist and workers' parties. I also attended the subsequent world meeting in Moscow from 5 to 17 June 1969 as a member of our party's delegation under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht. I have often been to Moscow in my life, and every visit has left memories of people and events. One of the most impressive of these experiences, however, was this international conference. As I mentioned, its purpose was the formulation of the common goals of communists, and there were also some differences of opinion. The most important thing was that the communist parties which were working under the most diverse conditions in the world were able to establish after careful joint analysis of international developments that the factual conditions had matured for the solution of the most urgent problems of the present time in the interests of peace and the world's nations. This assessment has since been proved absolutely right. This is equally true of the orientation given in the joint document adopted by the conference with regard to other issues.

The atmosphere of this conference, its cordiality and mutual understanding, the constructive and candid nature of the discussions and its firm confidence, left a deep impression. More than a decade has passed since then. Much has changed in the world for the better, though not without persistent efforts and in many respects not yet to the extent desirable. But the communists, for whom peace, détente and disarmament are among the highest values, do not cease to point the way to the attainment of these goals.

It will surely be understandable if I mention in this context the conference of 29 European communist and workers' parties which was held in Berlin in June 1976. In close contact with the Polish United Workers' Party and the Italian Communist Party, which had suggested holding the conference, the SED made its contribution to the latter's success. During the 20 months of preparations I exchanged ideas with the general secretaries and first secretaries of the fraternal parties taking part. The atmosphere of fraternal exchange of views contributed to the success of the conference.

In my speech during this conference I reiterated the SED's resolve to continue to do everything within its power in the interest of our own people and of all peace-loving mankind for the continuation of the policy of peace. I expressed the firm conviction that the results of the conference would find great resonance and support far beyond the confines of our continent. And so it came to pass. The communist parties agreed on common goals for action in the struggle for peace, security, collaboration and social progress in Europe. If one takes up the document today, nearly four years later, it is obvious that these goals have lost nothing of their topicality.

In the Western camp the relations between the communist parties have always been the target of many attacks and crudest slander. They are best refuted by the practical aspects of our comradely collaboration. Complete equality of rights, mutual respect, trust and solidarity are the hallmarks of relations between our parties. Comradely exchanges of ideas and familiarisation with the experiences of others always give rise to important new impulses. Of course, differing points of view emerge with regard to the odd issue. How could it be otherwise, considering the complexity of modern world developments, the multiplicity of problems and the different conditions under which the individual communist parties operate? The basic identity of goals and concepts, however, always leads us to solutions in the common interest even for the most complicated problems.

Détente has brought considerable benefits for the world's nations during

the last decade. But the accumulation of the means of nuclear annihilation with their extraordinary power of destruction still represents a serious danger to the future of mankind. There can be no task more important than the banishment of this danger. Instead of walking on the edge of an abyss, of a nuclear inferno, nations want to live in lasting peace. What we have rebuilt from the ruins of the Second World War in a period of over 30 years—this is how the citizens of the GDR see it—must not be reduced to ashes again. Therefore the GDR makes every effort to prevent a war ever being started again from German soil.

History shows us all too clearly that over-estimation of its own possibilities, adventurism, provocative actions, the striving for hegemony and aggressiveness are in the very nature of imperialism. For this reason we are forced to maintain the defences of our countries at the required level. This costs a lot of effort. In this respect as well the Soviet Union carries the main burden of securing peace. Its defensive power, not least in the shape of the soldiers of the Soviet army who serve on the territory of the GDR, are an irreplaceable factor in our security.

The National People's Army of the GDR is united with the Soviet army and the armies of the other Warsaw Treaty countries by ties of close comradeship. Educated in the spirit of internationalism and friendship between nations, our soldiers know that their task is the sure defence of peace and the security of our republic. For the first time in German history there is an army which knows only one military doctrine: to safeguard peace and to do everything to prevent a war of aggression. It is led by officers many of whom have actively fought against fascism. The permanently high degree of readiness of our people's army to defend the socialist German state of workers and peasants is at the same time the fulfilment of the legacy of all those who fought against fascism and for peace.

Ever since my party entrusted me with great responsibility for its military policy I have maintained close contacts with the leading military men of the Soviet army and the other armies of the united armed forces of the Warsaw Treaty. It is part of my regular practice to discuss fundamental issues of the joint armed defence of socialism and peace in Europe, of bilateral and multilateral collaboration within the socialist military coalition with the chiefs of military delegations from the Soviet Union and other fraternal states in personal talks. On these occasions and not least when visiting the troops, during exercises and manoeuvres of the united armed forces on the territory of the GDR, our personal relationships have been deepened. I am

thinking of such experienced generals and military leaders as the Marshals of the Soviet Union and supreme commanders of the Group of Soviet Armed Forces in Germany, G. K. Zhukov, V. D. Sokolovski, V. I. Chuikov, A. A. Grechko, M. V. Sakharov, I. I. Yakubovski, I. S. Konev, P. K. Koshevoi, and V. G. Kulikov, the latter being the present supreme commander of the united armed forces of the Warsaw Treaty states; Generals S. K. Kurkotkin and Y. F. Ivanovski as well as the defence ministers, chiefs of staff and other leading generals of the fraternal socialist armies. We have become friends and comrades-in-arms through our joint work.

As secretary of the security commission of the Central Committee and as secretary and chairman of the GDR's National Defence Council I have always had an influence on all the main directions, forms and methods of military collaboration of our allied armies and the strengthening of the socialist military alliance. The highest form of joint training of our socialist armies is the exercises and manoeuvres carried out according to the plans of the united command. A number of them have taken place on the territory of the GDR. Together with other comrades from the Politbureau of the SED I attended them. These exercises demonstrated the striking power, the unity and cohesion as well as the military mastery of the allied troops taking part. To our satisfaction they showed that the units and the leadership of the service arms of our National People's Army fulfilled well the tasks which the united command had set them.

I remember for instance the meeting which took place at the beginning of the joint manoeuvre designated October Storm in October 1965. In my speech I emphasised that any military provocation and any aggression against the GDR and against socialism would fail in the face of the unity of the socialist states and the firm comradeship-in-arms of their armed forces. It was symbolic that the manoeuvre started on the grounds of the former Nazi concentration camp of Buchenwald near Weimar. In the presence of tens of thousands of people from the district of Erfurt I spoke to the troops taking part in the manoeuvre about their commitment to fulfil, through their joint action for the protection of socialism and peace, the legacy of the 56,000 comrades who had been murdered here by the Nazis. I finished with these words: "We renew the vow of the fighters of Buchenwald: Our cause is just, victory must be ours." This was the joint vow of the 21,000 Buchenwald prisoners, antifascist resistance fighters from many nations, for whom the gate to freedom had been opened two decades earlier.

It was an uplifting experience for all of us to hear the solemn pledge of the soldiers of the fraternal armies to safeguard with all the stoutness of their hearts, with all their knowledge and all their ability socialism, the stronghold of peace, progress and humanism, and as socialist internationalists to be prepared to defend, shoulder to shoulder, the power of the workers and peasants. "In the face of the sacred flame, faithful to the legacy of our beloved dead, aware of the commitment to the living—we pledge ourselves to the happiness and the peace of all nations," were the words that echoed across the big square. In these hours I experienced, as did probably all of those present, still more intensely the strength welling up from the deep historic roots and traditions of an internationalist military policy. It was and is the strong foundation of our sure collective defence.

I consider it a special obligation to contribute to ever closer and more cordial relations between the soldiers of our people's army and their Soviet comrades-in-arms on the territory of the GDR. The fighting community of the National People's Army and the Group of Soviet Armed Forces in Germany has grown constantly stronger. "It is one of the greatest achievements of our joint military policy," I was able to say in 1972, "that an atmosphere of cooperation based on trust, cordial friendship and close comradeship exists and is being successfully developed further at all levels of command, in all arms of service and in all units of the forces."

Today there exists an almost limitless number of agreements on co-operation between units, service arms and formations, schools and other institutions of our armed forces and those of our Soviet brothers-in-arms. They comprise all spheres of military life. From commanders down to the most junior soldiers the collaboration with the Soviet troops has become a genuine affair of the heart for the members of our armed forces. Combat training in particular has become the main field in which our comradeship-in-arms is proved every day.

Under the banner of internationalist military policy the unity between the people and the army has also grown beyond the country's borders. This finds expression in the whole country when everybody talks of "our soldiers" whether they are artillerymen of the Soviet army, motorised infantrymen of the Czechoslovak People's Army, paratroopers of the Polish army, tank troops of the National People's Army or members of other Warsaw Treaty armies. This closeness between the people and the army will remain a source of strength for the security of socialism and peace.

At meetings with the leaders of the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw

Treaty countries we always face the following question: How can we best guarantee our security in view of NATO's arms build-up? If we allocated insufficient funds for this purpose a gap in our defence system would result which could have irreparable consequences. On the other hand, the necessary measures in the interest of defence capability cause a substantial economic burden. For this reason too we consider disarmament a key issue of the present time—for the benefit of all nations.

Political détente must continue and must be supplemented by military détente. This is one of the most urgent tasks of world policy in our time. We are doing everything within our power towards this end and welcome every constructive proposal no matter where it comes from.



**At the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on
Security and Cooperation in Europe, Helsinki 1 August 1975.
(From l. to r.: Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany;
Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the Central Committee
of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany;
Gerald Ford, President of the United States of America;
and Bruno Kreisky, Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria).**

XXXI

Helsinki: Signing the final document

On 1 August 1975, on behalf of the people of the GDR, I put my signature to the Final Act of the Helsinki conference. Nothing could be heard but the humming of film cameras and the clicking of photo-cameras. Protocol decreed that I was to sit between the Federal Chancellor of the FRG, Helmut Schmidt, and the President of the USA, Gerald Ford. Thus my signature on the document came second. Yugoslavia's President Josip Broz Tito signed last. He had hardly done so when long drawn-out applause welled up. None of those present could fail to sense the greatness of this historic act. The leaders of 35 states had signed a document which had been prepared in more than three years of protracted, hard and complicated negotiations.

In this solemn moment the representatives of all European states plus the USA and Canada were agreed that the results of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe were of extraordinary significance for the further consolidation of peace and security not only on our continent. What the socialist countries, the Soviet Union in particular, had worked for untiringly and insistently, became reality.

The incessant efforts which the Soviet Union had made from an early date for peaceful coexistence between socialism and capitalism went through my mind: from the 1922 Genoa conference via the repeated constructive pro-

posals for collective European security at the League of Nations to the almost innumerable initiatives at the United Nations. This long-standing policy bore fruit in the Helsinki Final Act.

The Potsdam Agreement concluded by the main powers of the anti-Hitler coalition in 1945 had been meant to lay the foundations for a stable structure of peace. But the West's "roll-back" strategy brought about a prolonged period of cold war. Since 1954 the Soviet Union had untiringly made one effort after the other to achieve progress on the road to European security. It was actively supported by joint proposals from the Warsaw Treaty states. Only towards the late sixties, when the change in the international balance of forces could no longer be ignored even by the most rabid of cold warriors, did the idea of a European security conference gradually gain ground with realists among politicians in the Western world.

I could not help thinking of how many times since 1949 we in the SED Central Committee and in the government of the GDR had considered proposals and ideas for achieving a stable peace on our continent. Without being presumptuous we can claim that the GDR contributed actively and constructively to bringing about the Helsinki conference and made considerable advance contributions towards it. I shall just mention the treaty on basic relations between the GDR and the FRG of December 1972 and the part the GDR played in bringing about the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin-West of September 1971.

Our interest in peace and security was an established fact from the beginning. In the GDR we had drawn the historical conclusions from the disastrous expansionism and the devastating acts of aggression by German imperialism and militarism. The Constitution of our socialist state makes it a duty to do everything to prevent a war from ever again being started from German soil. Our interest in Helsinki resulted not least from the nature of our society and the aims which we have laid down in the resolutions of our party congresses.

I repeat: Peace and socialism belong together. For our socialist development we need favourable conditions, which means in the first place peaceful external conditions. Helsinki makes it possible to achieve such conditions and peaceful coexistence between both social systems in Europe. This is one major reason why we appreciate the results of the security conference. They are in the interest of all nations.

Was the doubtlessly high cost in connection with the preparation of the conference compatible with its results? In my opinion the significance of the

Final Act for the improvement of the political situation in Europe has become more clearly visible as time has passed since the actual conference. The question can be answered in the affirmative without reservation.

On the basis of the realities that had arisen the conference confirmed and fixed the territorial and political outcome of the Second World War and the postwar development on our continent. It recognised and emphasised the sovereign existence and territorial integrity of all European states, above all the inviolability of their borders. Helsinki acknowledged the visible change from cold war to *détente*. The final document as a whole was in a way confirmed as a code for the application of the principles of peaceful coexistence, with the principles of interstate relations being universally recognised as its core.

The stipulations of the Final Act constitute the starting point from which the process of *détente* could be made irrevocable. I consider this document a long-term programme and at the same time a framework within which European security can be strengthened and cooperation based on equality of rights and mutual advantage developed. Certain forces were made to realise once more in Helsinki that their calculations concerning the future of Europe would not work out. They found themselves forced to adapt their policy to the real situation and to the balance of forces.

The security of frontiers in Europe is of quite particular importance to the GDR. It is therefore not surprising that we were extraordinarily active and persistent in the negotiations on these points. It is clear from the history of our people that the respect for, and recognition of, borders is of crucial significance if peaceful conditions are to be secured. The terrible wars which have ravaged Europe during this century originated always in the violation of frontiers and disregard for the territorial integrity of other states. The occupation of the Saarland, the *Anschluss* of Austria, the occupation of the Sudeten area of the Czechoslovak Republic, the occupation of the remaining Czech territory, the annexation of the Memel area and the ever more vociferous claims on Danzig, Upper Silesia and Alsace-Lorraine right to the open assault on Poland prepared for and finally provoked the Second World War.

Nor should it be forgotten that the CDU/CSU governments of the Federal Republic quite overtly made claims to a revision of borders right up to the advent of the seventies. It was only after the bilateral treaties between the USSR, the Polish People's Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the one hand and the FRG on the other, the treaty on basic relations

between the GDR and the FRG and other agreements, that the road was smoothed to multilateral arrangements, to the collective recognition of existing borders on the basis of international law in the final Helsinki document.

It was the historical lessons and the current requirements of policy which caused me to declare in Helsinki: "The security of the European states depended and depends above all on the security of their borders." Our persistent efforts have finally borne fruit in this respect as well. One can even go so far as to say that the Helsinki Final Act has for the first time in Europe created the preconditions which permit the breaking of the vicious circle of "war—postwar—preparation for war—war". This is the first time in history that Europe has experienced such a long period of peace. This must be continued and guaranteed on a lasting basis.

The agreement on the state borders between the GDR and the FRG, which was achieved after long drawn-out, complicated negotiations, has also taken into account the concern of Helsinki to make European borders secure. I consider this agreement too an essential contribution to peace. After all, the border between the two German states is one of the most sensitive points in the immediate field of tension between the two military coalitions.

The Helsinki conference was the biggest collective action by European states since the anti-Hitler coalition. With a view to the 35th anniversary of the liberation of the German people from Nazism I should like to say that it fills us with deep satisfaction to find once more the spirit of the anti-Hitler coalition in the final Helsinki document. It ought to and can help to implement the principles and goals which had already been envisaged in the Potsdam Agreement.

To me the Helsinki conference, which I look on as the first genuine European peace conference, means above all the fulfilment of a commitment which the SED's 8th Party Congress in 1971 took upon itself vis-à-vis the people of the GDR. On behalf of the Central Committee I had stated "that we are open to all proposals and ideas which will further the peaceful coexistence of the European nations and states . . . We shall never be found wanting in constructive attitudes and good will . . . The GDR stands for the calling of a European security conference as soon as possible and is prepared to contribute, as an equal partner, towards its success." Within a period of four years—while we were still preparing for our 9th Party Congress—this task was successfully achieved.

For me Helsinki offered an important opportunity for meeting and

exchanging views with our closest allies as well as with leaders of the capitalist world. A new phase in the development of bilateral and multilateral collaboration between the GDR and the majority of capitalist states represented in Helsinki began. I conferred with a considerable number of chiefs of state and heads of government on the expansion of bilateral relations and exchanged views on major issues of world politics. A new chapter in the equal participation of the GDR in the solution of vital international problems was thus opened.

My cordial encounters with Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, Josip Broz Tito, Gustav Husák, János Kádár, Todor Zhivkov and Nicolae Ceaușescu in Helsinki demonstrated once more our untiring work for peace. The meetings with the leaders of the countries of the socialist community were an expression of the continual coordination of foreign policy activities which have already become a matter of course in our collaboration.

I have in my diary of the Helsinki conference the names of the politicians with whom I had talks there: Trygve Bratteli, prime minister of the Kingdom of Norway, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, president of the French Republic, Helmut Schmidt, chancellor of the FRG, Gerald Ford, president of the USA, Urho Kekkonen, president of the Republic of Finland, Leo Tindemans, prime minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, Olof Palme, prime minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, Monsignore Agostino Casaroli, secretary of the Council for Public Affairs of the Vatican, Francisco da Costa Gomes, president of the Republic of Portugal, Pierre Graber, federal president and head of the federal political department of the Swiss Confederation, Aldo Moro, prime minister of the Republic of Italy, Anker Jørgensen, prime minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, Pierre Trudeau, prime minister of Canada—with whom I reached agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the GDR and Canada—and Archbishop Makarios, president of the Republic of Cyprus.

The talks we had with these leaders of countries from western, northern and southern Europe, the USA and Canada were for the most part intensive, thorough, businesslike and substantially useful. Most of these encounters were my first personal contacts. This opportunity of getting to know each other was doubtless in our mutual interests and conducive to trust and better understanding.

I also met a delegation from the World Peace Council led by its secretary-general, Romesh Chandra.

All those I talked to were agreed on continuing the process of détente with

determination and on making use of bilateral relations in this connection. Some problems in our then still relatively new relations could be resolved then and there or at least brought nearer to a solution. Some of my interlocutors took the opportunity of talking about humanitarian issues. I treated them according to the principles of socialist policy in a generous and forthcoming way. Almost all of my interlocutors, incidentally, confirmed this.

I remember well a talk I had with the then president of the USA, Gerald Ford. The seating arrangements at the conference permitted—especially during a dinner given by Finland's president, Urho Kekkonen, for the chiefs of state and heads of government—an extensive exchange of ideas. It comprised topics ranging from bilateral collaboration to the joint space flight of the USA and the USSR. I congratulated President Ford on the results of the Apollo-Soyuz mission. He replied with congratulations on the successes of the GDR swimmers at the world championships.

The very useful exchange of ideas in Helsinki, above all on the role of the final document in the process of détente in Europe and its realisation, was continued during the following years in encounters I had in the GDR with the secretary-general of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, Finland's president, Urho Kekkonen, the federal chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky, the French foreign minister, Jean François-Poncet, and other personalities.

The world followed the first encounters between Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and myself in Helsinki with lively interest. The exchange of views was useful. We were able to note that positive changes had taken place in the relationship between the GDR and the FRG. We agreed on the conclusion that the results achieved so far should be consolidated and expanded and obstacles removed. However, I repeatedly said in Helsinki that there were still serious disturbances in the process of normalising relations between the GDR and the FRG and that there was a danger of setbacks. Regrettably, this has been proved to be true too.

On the flight back from Helsinki to Berlin we wondered what would come of the Final Act in practice. Would all signatories let themselves be guided by the spirit and the letter of the document or would some try to interpret the results of the Helsinki conference only according to their own interests? Very soon it became apparent that there was reason to take forthcoming negative trends duly into account.

The ink on the final document was not dry yet when Western media, seconded by certain political circles, tried to falsify the document, to interpret it onesidedly, to take individual parts—especially those relating to

cooperation on humanitarian matters—out of context and to attribute an exclusive nature to them. Some apparently believed that by abusing the conference results they could achieve what had previously been denied them.

We have the final document on our side when we resolutely reject all such attempts. It was drafted as a whole, therefore it has to be implemented as a whole. Nobody can escape this responsibility. All signatories have to adhere to the spirit and the letter of the Final Act. Anyone who thinks he can just pick out what he likes from it is departing from the fundamentals agreed in Helsinki. The GDR adheres to the solemn commitment made by all participating states, i.e. to respect and apply the Final Act in its totality, in all its parts, and the interrelations between the latter. It expects, however, that the other states do likewise.

Western mass media, and even responsible politicians in the capitalist states, are untiring in their efforts to impute to the GDR and to the socialist countries generally an alleged backlog in the humanitarian field. In doing so they bypass reality and truth! We never had nor do we have now any backlog, neither in the “humanitarian” field in general nor as regards human rights, a favourite theme of certain circles in the West.

There is a direct connection between détente, the principles of the final document and humanitarian issues. The greater the progress in détente, the greater the progress on humanitarian issues. The persistent brazen interference in our internal affairs does not help to further progress on humanitarian issues.

The GDR has tackled the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act with seriousness and a great sense of responsibility. There is now not a single section of this document on which we have not taken or prepared action. For a long time there have existed records, facts and figures to prove this. They can be proudly shown, and we have no reason to shy away from any comparisons.

This is also true, without exception, of the so-called “Basket 3” of the final document. I should just like to mention some out of many proofs. Millions of copies of the Final Act as well as of the documents of the Belgrade meeting were published in our country. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the contents of the final document are part of the curriculum of our schools, universities and colleges. The GDR publishes about six times the amount of information from participating capitalist states in newspapers, magazines, films and documentaries, radio

and television programmes and through book licences ■ the West is prepared to publish in terms of information coming from the GDR. Tourist traffic has shown an increasing trend since Helsinki. Between 1976 and 1980 an annual average of 17 million citizens of other countries visited the GDR; this is roughly equal to the population of the GDR. Every year 12 million GDR citizens travel abroad, of which more than three million travel to non-socialist countries.

These facts demonstrate convincingly that the GDR has no deficit either in the exchange of information or in human contacts. To keep pace with the openness of the GDR where tourist traffic is concerned, the USA would have to admit by comparison about 220 million, the FRG about 60 million and France about 54 million foreign visitors annually.

Where human rights are concerned the situation is just as clear. The highest principle of socialism is that people must always come first. The socialist state grants and realises the fundamental rights of man. This has found expression in the far-reaching social welfare measures adopted at the 8th and the 9th Party Congress of the SED which I have already described elsewhere.

Among the derogatory claims made by Western media against the results of Helsinki one often finds the assertion that the conference has given more to the socialist states than to the capitalist ones, that the socialist states are the real gainers. This can in no way be justified. If one bears in mind that eight socialist states were negotiating with 27 capitalist ones, the argument that the socialist states gained an unfair advantage from the European security conference bursts like a soap bubble on account of the ratio alone. The compromise nature of the results is well known without this obscuring the difference of ideology and social structure between the participating states. But this compromise is advantageous and beneficial to all concerned. It contains a sound balance of give and take. This was, by the way, the unanimous opinion of the participants in the conference. In all the talks I have had with leading politicians and statesmen from Europe, Asia and Africa since Helsinki I have found time and again that they shared our opinion. There is no alternative to Helsinki, to détente, if Europe wants to live in peace and security.

For the GDR as a socialist state the striving for peace, security and disarmament has always been the basic principle of its foreign policy. The resolutions of the SED's party congresses, the steps taken by the government, the documents of foreign policy, the attitude of the leading representatives

of our country in public, not least at the United Nations, prove that the GDR seriously endeavours to meet its share of responsibility for peace and security at each stage of the world's political development.

Helsinki was an important step, not the final step but the prelude to a promising period of peaceful cooperation between the European states. The Final Act as a long-term programme for European security has laid down the main direction for further positive steps and set sure signposts for the road to be taken. Helsinki has promoted equal, mutually advantageous international cooperation. The results, including those for the GDR, are clearly visible. For this reason I have repeatedly stated, in my capacity as general secretary of the SED Central Committee and chairman of the GDR's Council of State, that our country observes the provisions of the final document of Helsinki in letter and spirit and shall continue to do so. We stand by the commitments we entered into on that day in August 1975.

The negotiations in Helsinki prove that it is possible to find answers even to difficult problems, to work out compromises and to reach a consensus. Regrettably, political détente has not yet been complemented by military détente even though the final document offers important points of departure for this as well.

The existing circumstances in Europe make it more and more urgent to promote military détente with the same dedication and determination which has brought success for political détente. I said in Helsinki: "We note with concern that military détente lags behind the progress of political détente. The continuation of the arms race could endanger the hard-won results of political détente... The GDR is of the opinion that determined and effective measures need to be agreed upon in the field of disarmament and arms limitation as well." Developments have proved this point only too well.

After Helsinki the arguments over a policy of peaceful coexistence in the world, its essence, its content and its prospects continued with undiminished, even heightened intensity. The forces hostile to détente have increased their resistance. One cannot ignore the fact that many attempts are being made to undermine the generally recognised principles for the relations between states, to threaten peace seriously and to return to the cold war.

In full knowledge of the dangerous consequences the NATO states decided as early as 1975 to modernise their nuclear weapons in Europe and in 1978 adopted their so-called long-term programme. In view of the NATO decisions of December 1979 to produce new American nuclear medium-

range missiles and to deploy them in Western Europe the resolute defence of peace is more urgent than ever.

Instead of making the road to positive results for peace through disarmament more difficult—or worse, to block it—it is necessary to keep it unobstructed, to stabilise and expand what has so far been achieved.

What the socialist states want is not to increase armaments in order to negotiate but to negotiate in order to further disarmament.

At a time when Europe faces a decision of grave importance for its future the Soviet Union's initiative announced by Leonid Brezhnev on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the GDR on 7 October 1979 in Berlin shows the world's nations the constructive way of securing peace, of ending the arms race and bringing about disarmament. Either political détente is complemented and consolidated by military détente or there will be a new round in the arms race with all its burdens and dangers for the people. This is the crucial issue.

Despite all warnings that the NATO decision to introduce new types of medium-range missiles would destroy the basis for negotiations and would have negative effects on the relations between East and West such a decision was taken in Brussels. This only strengthens our determination to do everything necessary, together with the other Warsaw Treaty states, to safeguard the security of the socialist states. One can already take it for granted today that NATO will not achieve the superiority over the Warsaw Treaty states which it is striving for. Of course, we shall not be deterred from our efforts to continue the process of détente and disarmament—in other words, of protecting peace—by the facts created by the NATO powers and in particular by the USA.

The GDR remains prepared to cooperate with anyone who is willing to safeguard the foundations of European security and to strengthen them further. To this end a conference of the states which participated in the Helsinki conference, this time on military détente in Europe, would be of great value. It would provide an opportunity to agree on a programme of concrete confidence-building measures and also on steps directed towards diminishing the concentration and reducing the level of armed forces in Europe.



In conversation with Helmut Schmidt,
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helsinki,
30 July 1975.

XXXII

Two German states

As I have already said the German Democratic Republic conducts its relations with the capitalist nations according to the principles of peaceful coexistence. This also applies to its relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Not only bilateral interests are affected here, but also many questions of peace and security for all European nations concerning both present and future. After all, both German states are located in the centre of a field of tension on which the issue of war or peace is being decided. The GDR and the FRG are firmly integrated into the fundamentally different social systems of socialism and capitalism and their alliance systems, the Warsaw Treaty and NATO.

It is precisely from this that the great responsibility is derived to which the leadership of party and government in the GDR feel committed. We have in mind both the interests of socialist development in our country and the requirements of peace and security on the entire European continent. Therefore we do everything so that both German states may contribute to a stable order of peace in Europe by normalising their mutual relations.

During the Second World War 20 million people from the Soviet Union, many sons and daughters of the peoples of Poland, Yugoslavia, France, Great Britain, the USA and other countries sacrificed their lives. In a heroic

and costly struggle they destroyed fascist barbarism. Yet they fought not only for victory, but in order to remove for ever the sources of the aggressive policy of German imperialism and to lay the foundation stone for a peaceful Europe. To these vital interests of all nations the GDR devotes its activity in the field of foreign policy. In this it knows itself to be at one with the Soviet Union and the other socialist states and acts in unison with them.

If one looks at how the relations between the GDR and the FRG have changed during the seventies, if one compares the current state of affairs with the situation in the fifties and sixties when the ruling circles in the FRG repeatedly escalated their revanchist and aggressive policy to the brink of war, then there is no reason to underestimate the positive changes. The outline scheme for the normalisation of relations with the FRG which I submitted to the 8th Party Congress of the SED in 1971 on behalf of the Central Committee proved to be good and right, realistic and successful. I said then: "The GDR declares its readiness to establish normal diplomatic relations with all countries. In this we base ourselves on the equality of rights of all states and are guided by the obvious principle that every state respects the sovereignty of the GDR in the same way as the GDR on its part fully respects the sovereignty of other states. The GDR continues to stand for the establishment of normal relations according to the rules of international law, and this goes for the FRG too."

Our point of departure was that on the territory of the former "German Reich" two fundamentally different, mutually independent, sovereign states with contrary social structures had developed between which unbridgeable socio-economic, political and ideological divergences exist. Their mutual relations can—like the relations between other socialist and capitalist states—have no other basis than the principles of peaceful coexistence and international law. This problem assumes a particularly categorical form in regard to the relations between the two German states. For influential forces in the FRG pin their hopes on exploiting such historical factors as the identity of national origin, identity of language, history and culture as well as family ties resulting from the former unity of Germany in order to wipe out our socialist system.

On the basis of international law and the principles of peaceful coexistence, however, it could and should be possible, we thought, to develop a kind of cooperation on an equal footing and to mutual advantage in order to contribute to détente, goodneighbourly cooperation and a lasting peace. Social contradictions need not be ■■■ obstacle.

At the same time we considered it absolutely necessary to make unmistakably clear what had developed out of the postwar situation with regard to the national question. Analysing those processes which had occurred on German soil since 1945, I pointed out: "As regards the national question history has already pronounced its verdict... In contrast to the FRG where ■ bourgeois nation continues to exist and where the national question is determined by the irreconcilable contradiction between the classes, between the bourgeoisie and the working masses, ■ socialist nation is developing in the GDR, in the socialist German state."

The development of the two German states has confirmed this. If peace and security are to become strong and lasting there must be no room allowed for any new "pan-German ambitions". All nations which have had bitter experience of the policy of imperialist Germany will certainly agree with us on this score.

In our concept of normalisation of relations with the FRG we were able to build on the fact that in the late sixties and early seventies conditions had emerged which made a change of direction towards détente and peaceful coexistence possible in these relations as well. The opportunity had to be grasped. Another major factor was the treaties which the Soviet Union and the Polish People's Republic had concluded with the FRG in 1970 and the signing of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin-West. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was under preparation. These important steps served détente, and in the same sense the normalisation of relations between the GDR and the FRG would be of great significance.

The process of détente in Europe could not be advanced without the accomplishment of this task. It was, after all, an essential condition for détente that the results of the Second World War and of the postwar development on German soil should be recognised in international law. These were the motives that determined our approach. In the negotiations with the Soviet Union which I was authorised to conduct in connection with the preparation of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin-West we made an active contribution to its conclusion. In December 1971 we signed an agreement on transit traffic between the GDR and the FRG and in the same month agreements between the GDR and the Senate of Berlin-West. It was also our initiative which led to the conclusion of the first state treaty between the GDR and the FRG in May 1972, ■ treaty regulating traffic. These agreements made it possible to normalise relations in some fields.

However, beyond this it was necessary to settle the fundamental questions

concerning the relationship of the two German states. To this effect I submitted concrete proposals on behalf of the GDR on 18 April 1972. I declared the willingness of our state to enter into an exchange of opinions—after the ratification of the treaties concluded by the USSR and the Polish People's Republic with the FRG—about the establishment of normal relations between the two German states and to arrange the necessary agreements under international law. Outlining the prospects I said that a development could be started “which would lead to peaceful coexistence between the GDR and the FRG, to normal goodneighbourly relations opening up the prospect of cooperation in the interests of peace, and in the interests of the citizens of both states.”

After extremely difficult negotiations during the time of the election campaign in the FRG, during which bogged-down talks were rescued by many ■ gesture of goodwill from our side, the treaty on basic relations between the GDR and the FRG was concluded in December 1972. This treaty—and in this lies its importance—created the basis under international law for ■ normalisation of relations in the spirit of peaceful coexistence. Both states committed themselves to develop their mutual relations on the basis of equality of rights, sovereign equality, respect for independence and territorial integrity, self-determination, safeguarding of human rights and non-discrimination, i.e. according to the principles of international law ■■ laid down in the UN Charter. They affirmed the inviolability of the border between them. Both sides declared that neither partner to the treaty could represent the other or act on his behalf. Each would respect the independence of the other in their respective internal and external affairs. In the treaty itself and in supplementary documents both sides expressed their intention of developing and promoting cooperation in a number of specific fields. They committed themselves to furthering peaceful relations between European states, contributing to security and cooperation in Europe and supporting efforts aimed at arms limitation and disarmament.

These principles and agreements in the basic treaty are—and there is no getting past this—the inviolable foundation for the relations between the two German states. Whenever they were respected and applied by both sides further positive steps towards cooperation became possible. But whenever attempts were made to subvert or violate them complications and strains were bound to arise.

We are for a development of relations with the FRG which will avoid unnecessary aggravations and complications. I have therefore always endea-

voured to keep things moving in a forward direction. Although reactions from the other side to our offers were often ambivalent and fell short of expectations, and willingness to accommodate on our side was not infrequently met with ill-timed new demands, we shall not be deterred from our concept. We shall continue to show persistence.

I should like to recall here my first meeting with Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt during the Helsinki conference in 1975. On other occasions and in other forms as well I make use of contacts with the chancellor and ministers of the federal government, with the parliamentary leaders—as with Herbert Wehner and Wolfgang Mischnick in 1973—and with other leading politicians from the FRG in order to stimulate new steps in the normalisation process or to remove obstacles.

When I review the results of our efforts to establish normal relations with the FRG I cannot leave unmentioned the fact that progress has been time and again answered with attacks, slander and provocations against the GDR by certain far from uninfluential circles in the FRG. On account of this a number of opportunities to establish goodneighbourly relations with the FRG could not be utilised to the full.

The party programme adopted at the 9th Party Congress in 1976 has again clearly mapped out the long-term outline of our policy regarding relations with the FRG. It lays down that the relations between the socialist GDR and the capitalist FRG shall be developed as relations between sovereign states with different social systems on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence and the norms of international law. It further says that in view of the fundamental contrast between the social systems of the GDR and the FRG only a policy of mutual respect for sovereignty can promote the normalisation of relations and peaceful coexistence of both states as well as constructive, equal and mutually advantageous cooperation in the interests of peace.

This orientation is based on the realities. At the same time it bars the way firmly to all those who still believe they can disregard the sovereign rights and the interests of the GDR.

Of course, it cannot be expected that the complicated problems which have accumulated during the decades of cold war in the relations between the two German states can be resolved at a stroke. Every step requires that the legitimate interests of both sides be mutually respected. But the whole point of the policy of peaceful coexistence is that disputed issues be settled peacefully and constructively on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect.

No realistic idea of the other side should be disregarded. More than a little has been achieved in this way even though the collaboration between the two German states as regards for instance disarmament leaves still much to be desired.

I attach great importance to the government protocol on the demarcation of the border between the two states which was signed on 28 November 1978. The firm respect for the integrity and inviolability of borders is an inalienable precondition for peace, security and goodneighbourly co-operation. This is true in especially high measure for the relations between neighbouring states which find themselves in such a situation as the GDR and the FRG. In view of the fact that our Western frontier has been exposed to overt attacks for decades and that certain circles in the Federal Republic have to this day not given up their dangerous, if illusory, hopes still to revise this border some day, the political importance of the agreed demarcation of that border can hardly be overestimated. With this agreement the nature of this border as a state border under international law—contrary to all other interpretation—was clearly confirmed. Thus more favourable conditions have been created for safeguarding it.

Today the agreements on constructive and mutually advantageous co-operation already encompass a large area. Agreements on health services, postal and telecommunication services and other issues have been added to the transit agreement and the treaty on other traffic issues. Others are being negotiated. Initial mutual visits by ministers from both states signalled further possibilities for cooperation.

It is natural that international agreements on traffic issues should have a great influence on goodneighbourly collaboration. This applies also to the relations between the two German states. An essential condition for such agreements is, however, that the sovereign rights of the partners over their communications routes should be mutually and strictly respected. An agreement reached in 1975 provided for cost-sharing by the FRG in the reconstruction of the GDR autobahn Berliner Ring—Marienborn which carries a considerable part of the transit traffic to and from West Berlin. Meanwhile this agreement has been realised as planned. In 1978 further agreements on a whole complex of traffic issues were made, among them a cost participation by the FRG in the construction of an autobahn to Hamburg through the GDR and the repair of internal transit waterways in the GDR. Further measures to facilitate motor traffic were agreed in 1979.

Despite their knowledge to the contrary, certain circles in the FRG claim

that these agreements were onesidedly in favour of the GDR. The facts tell a different story. The agreements are based on the principle of balanced contributions. They were entered into with full regard to mutual interests. It would be rather naïve to assume that the capitalist FRG would want to contribute to financing the development of socialism. It makes contributions to projects in the GDR which are obviously of no small interest to itself. Some of these projects were not even part of our original economic plans. The FRG's contributions cover only a part of the considerable cost which our state has to bear. Even if this results in additional burdens for us I consider such agreements primarily as a contribution to détente, to a climate which furthers goodneighbourly collaboration.

The experience of recent years confirms that relations according to those principles which were agreed upon in the basic treaty and in the final document of Helsinki favour the realisation of the desires and interests of the citizens of both German states. During the seventies the tourist traffic, in both directions, increased sharply and reached a certain stability at a substantial volume. On average more than 7.5 million people annually arrived in the GDR from non-socialist countries between 1976 and 1978, among them over three million citizens of the FRG. More than 3.3 million inhabitants of West Berlin came to our country each year. Of the over three million GDR citizens who travelled to non-socialist countries annually, roughly 1.4 million travelled to the FRG and West Berlin. These figures prove that the GDR authorities treat citizens' applications for visits to relatives, among them urgent family visits, very generously. Despite hostile propaganda against us, particularly where so-called humanitarian questions are concerned, despite repeated threats to the security of our state and its citizens, we have gone to the limits of what is currently possible.

We do a lot to resolve the problems connected with bringing families together. Between 1 July 1977 and 30 June 1978 alone 15,000 GDR citizens received permission to emigrate to the FRG and West Berlin. However, these issues are, as in any other state, exclusively under our own sovereign jurisdiction.

Our trade and economic relations with the FRG have not developed badly in recent years. Between 1972 and 1979 the exchange of goods and services increased from roughly 5,200 million marks to about 9,000 million marks. The Federal Republic is thus our biggest trade partner among the capitalist industrial countries. About 6,000 companies in the FRG participate in these relations. We constantly sense the strong interest in stable deliveries to the

GDR. The experiences and results, by now generally recognised, which have been obtained with long-term contracts for industrial plant on a barter basis, notably in the fields of metallurgy and chemicals, prove that both sides profit from them. Thousands of blue and white-collar workers in the FRG have a safe job on account of them, as has repeatedly been pointed out in that country.

In talks with representatives of leading FRG concerns at the Leipzig Trade Fair I have often reiterated that we are interested in the expansion of trade and in advanced forms of economic, scientific and technological collaboration for mutual advantage, not least in collaboration in third markets. What is primarily needed in order to expand the present volume of these economic relations is steps by the FRG which will guarantee the mutuality and balance of exports of both countries. I am convinced that it would be beneficial for all to expand the economic relations with the Federal Republic and with other capitalist states in our mutual interest.

The results of the normalisation of relations between the GDR and the FRG so far may be summed up by saying that much has been accomplished in pursuing the course of peaceful coexistence. This is a positive development for détente and for the safeguarding of peace in Europe. However, if one looks at the still unresolved problems, then one must note just as realistically that we still have a good way to go to a comprehensive normalisation. In addition, the relations between the two states are constantly subjected to violent strains and complications which in our opinion are completely unnecessary and the causes of which are in no way to be found in our policy. Since the ratification of the basic treaty in 1973 not a few attempts have been made in the FRG to distort it by onesided interpretations which contradict its content, strip it of its essence and in practice subvert it. A 1973 ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court contains arguments and interpretations of crucial points which are blatantly directed against the letter and the spirit of the treaty. It disputes, for instance, the border of our sovereign socialist state and, contrary to international law, equates it with an internal border such as the boundaries between the individual states of the FRG. While such revanchist views can change neither the substance of the treaty nor the realities, they complicate time and again the relations between the FRG and the GDR.

Only the basic treaty, its supplementary documents and the other agreements which have been concluded in the meantime have binding validity. Onesided interpretations, including those in favour of "special intra-German

relations" and of "leaving the German question open" have no validity whatsoever in international law. Exclusively relevant to the interpretation of the treaties are the principles of international law, and international law, as everyone knows, overrules national law.

There are influential forces in the FRG which flatly refuse to come to terms with the existence of the GDR and with socialism in our country. Since they realise that a correction of these historic facts is completely impossible at short term they work towards it in the long term. But whether in the short or in the long term peace can only be secured if one stands firmly on the ground of reality, which is the existence of two German states and the unalterable fact that the GDR is a sovereign, internationally recognised state vested with equal rights. Our republic is a member of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. Most of the world's countries maintain diplomatic relations with it.

During the past 30 years the fundamental differences between the social systems in the GDR and the FRG have become more and more pronounced. Both states are firmly committed to fundamentally different alliances. Hence there is no other way but to develop their relations on the basis of international law and the principles of peaceful coexistence. Everything else is illusion.

One word on the question of GDR citizenship. In places where our problems are not so well known the substance and significance of the dispute over this question may not be immediately understandable. If we had our way, there would be no need for any dispute in this field. Nothing more would be required than that the FRG strictly apply the principle of the existence of two independent and sovereign German states whose citizens have the citizenship of their respective states.

I argued for the inclusion of this in the basic relations treaty. But the other side was not prepared to accept it. We expressed the hope that the treaty would facilitate the clarification of this question. However, no progress has been made in this respect. The FRG still adheres to its discriminatory view of a so-called uniform "German citizenship" which it tries to justify with the assertion of a "duty to extend care and protection to all Germans". It is not prepared to respect GDR citizenship. These are far from being theoretical or purely legal questions. As practice shows it is a matter of disregard for the sovereignty of one state, i.e. ours, and of interference in its internal affairs, which is probably unique in the history of relations between sovereign states. Has not the GDR exercised great restraint in the face of this

situation by taking, in spite of it, many steps towards the development of cooperation with the FRG?

The further development of the relations between the two German states cannot be separated from the most important tasks in world politics, which are to make every effort to put an end to the arms race and to take concrete steps towards disarmament. It is obvious that the arms build-up undertaken by NATO—and the FRG is, after all, a member of this alliance—in order to change the military balance of forces in its favour, the rush from one new weapons system to the next, can only accentuate military confrontation and create grave dangers for world peace. Just the opposite, relaxation of confrontation and complementing political détente by military détente is on the international agenda. The basic trends of these processes also influence the climate between the two German states to no small degree.

It was concern for peace and security in Europe which caused me to emphasise in my speech on the 30th anniversary of the GDR: “What both the citizens of the GDR and the citizens of the FRG need is not the stationing of medium-range missiles in the West European states of NATO but co-operation between the two German states on problems of disarmament and in the spirit of peaceful coexistence.” The GDR has expressed its willingness in this respect to clarify with the government of the FRG issues which will bring further progress towards the safeguarding of peace and towards disarmament. A contribution by both German states to the solution of these problems would at the same time open up new prospects for the development of their relations.

To accelerate the arms race instead of stopping it, instead of complementing political détente with military détente, instead of strengthening trust, must do serious damage to political détente and must undermine the process of deepening mutual trust. If on account of this the whole political and military-strategic situation worsens, then such a development will inevitably have negative effects on the relations between the GDR and the FRG.

The campaign about an alleged threat from the East is nothing but an attempt to mislead the public. This “threat” does not exist. The Soviet Union, the GDR and the other socialist states pursue a policy aimed at creating an atmosphere in which men’s striving for peace and security for themselves, for their children, for their country, for Europe, will come into its own. Therefore the GDR favours further normalisation of its relations with the FRG and the expansion of cooperation.

All experience confirms, not least as regards the relationship between the two German states, that there is no reasonable alternative to peaceful coexistence. As in the past, so we shall in the future persistently adhere to this line. We shall continue to work for the two states to get along with each other in peace and mutual respect and to achieve goodneighbourly relations. In doing so we shall be taking account of the interests of our country and shall continue to meet others half way where the aim requires it.



With Mengistu Haile Mariam,
Chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council
and Council of Ministers
and Supreme Commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Socialist Ethiopia,
laying the foundation stone for the first monument to Karl Marx
to be erected on the African continent, Addis Ababa, 13 November 1979.

XXXIII

Between Manila and Havana

In the course of the seventies my travels took me to various countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, that is to continents whose peoples had freed themselves after what were often centuries of costly struggle against colonial, national and racial oppression. Time and again I found confirmation that knowledge obtained from analyses, reports and other written sources cannot be a substitute for personal experience.

On the fourth continent, too, socialism is beginning to get a foothold. My personal experiences in Africa have confirmed me in this conviction. In November 1979 I laid the foundation stone for the first Karl Marx monument on African soil in Addis Ababa together with Mengistu Haile Mariam, the chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council and the Council of Ministers of Socialist Ethiopia. This was a symbol of the irresistible progress of history the general laws of which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were the first to recognise and the course of which they predicted. This road leads mankind into the socialist future.

I experienced as long ago as my early youth what solidarity means, particularly during my clandestine struggle against Nazism and during my years in prison. The solidarity of the workers among themselves as well as their solidarity with all those in the world who stand for freedom, human

rights and social progress, has always been a characteristic feature of the revolutionary workers' movement.

It was therefore quite natural that thirty years ago this proletarian tradition should form part of the foundation on which we built our state. This was something completely new in the history of our people. A German state came into being which did not pursue imperialist, colonialist, racist aims but from the beginning firmly took the side of the peoples who were fighting for national and social liberation. Today the GDR is respected all over the world as a country that supports the struggle of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America in word and deed, politically, morally and materially to the best of its abilities.

My travels to the emergent nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America were an enriching experience which afforded me a lot of important new insights. They enabled me to understand more thoroughly the various complicated problems of the struggle for national and social liberation. At the same time they strengthened my conviction that no matter how varied the points of departure, the historical and geographical factors, the cultural traditions and the political experiences, the vital questions of all these peoples could in the end only be answered by consistent social progress. The fact that the nationally liberated peoples have to fend off continual counter-revolutionary assaults from within and neocolonialist attacks from without leads them to the conclusion that they can safeguard and complete their independence and sovereignty only if they rid themselves of all forms of exploitation. Many of them attempt to establish a society in which—as Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto*—"the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

We look upon all peoples who have thrown off the centuries-old colonial yoke and are struggling for a new life as allies in the battle for the renewal of human existence. We consider the national liberation revolution to be one of the most important social movements of our era. The socialist world is objectively the natural ally of the national liberation movements. We pursue the same goal, namely the safeguarding of peace and the attainment of independence, self-determination and social progress. We offer solidarity to the striving of peoples for national independence, economic and social advancement and social progress.

We support the struggle of the nationally liberated countries and the national liberation movements for economic independence by developing and expanding our relations with them. We consider it necessary to over-

come the outdated division of labour which degrades these peoples to objects of exploitation by multinational concerns. We therefore advocate equality in international economic relations. We strengthen the alliance with non-aligned countries in the struggle for peace, security and peaceful coexistence because they represent ■ positive force in international relations.

I found this basic point of view confirmed once more during my travels at the head of government delegations of the GDR to such countries as the Philippines and India. At the invitation of President Ferdinand Marcos I spent three days as a guest in the Republic of the Philippines in December 1977. Even though it was a short visit it gave me an impression of the efforts which this South East Asian country was undertaking to safeguard its independence and sovereignty. It has already taken important steps in developing ■ national economy. There are also, however, complicated economic problems which find expression, for instance, in a high rate of unemployment. This was certainly one reason why our hosts showed a lively interest in the GDR, particularly in the high standard, stability and dynamism of our economy.

The population of Manila received us most cordially. Imelda Marcos, wife of the president and governor of Manila, familiarised us with the impressive progress and with development problems in turning the capital of the Philippines into ■ modern metropolis for the country. We visited cultural and social institutions and the famous Nayong Pilipino outdoor museum. It provides an interesting insight into the multifaceted countryside of the 7,000 islands, into methods of production, customs and the cultural traditions of its inhabitants.

At the end of our visit President Marcos expressed high regard for the GDR in a way that went beyond the courtesies of protocol. He spoke of an "unusual experience" of a completely new practice of effective negotiating by our delegation, which was free of any tendencies towards protectionism or nationalism and which had impressed him deeply. After our talks we concluded economic agreements with the Philippines, which had established diplomatic relations with the socialist states only a few years earlier, in order to intensify and expand the cooperation between our countries.

In July 1976 Indira Gandhi, prime minister of the Republic of India, had come on a state visit to the GDR. She herself referred to it as ■ "trip of friendship". During her stay in our country she spoke out strongly in favour of peaceful coexistence, détente, and disarmament, and the intensification of friendship and cooperation between our peoples and countries. When

Indira Gandhi resumed the office of prime minister of India after her party's election victory in January 1980 I sent her cordial greetings and best wishes for the exercise of her great responsibilities. In her answer Indira Gandhi wrote: "I share your confidence that the friendship between our two countries in the coming years will develop further so that our two nations will derive benefit from our cooperation. I should like to assure you that my government will work in this spirit and for the creation of world peace."

In January 1979 I had the opportunity to visit India, following an invitation by President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy. Back in the twenties I had, ■ a young communist, taken part in actions by my party, the KPD, in support of the Indian liberation movement. The history of the relations between our nations is full of examples of cooperation between the humanist and progressive forces of the German people and the fighters for the freedom and independence of India. During the visit, in many encounters and talks we sensed time and again how vividly our friendly relations are felt in all sections of Indian society.

We were overwhelmed by the magnificent cultural monuments and the historic accomplishments of the Indian people and at the same time shaken by the marks of criminal colonialism. While the latter had been able to enslave and paralyse the creative forces of the country, it had not succeeded in destroying them. We found proof of this in the outstanding technological achievements of the Babha atomic research centre near Bombay. Colonialism is no mere "accident of history"—the people of India know that. Mahatma Gandhi taught them to understand it. At the Raj Ghat we honoured his memory.

In talks with Indian statesmen and during travels through the country we were able to familiarise ourselves with the enormous problems of this great, newly liberated country which has taken the capitalist road of development. This does not stand in the way of our fruitful collaboration, which is useful and advantageous to both sides. Regardless of differences in political and social systems we managed to record a considerable number of points of agreement in a joint communiqué at the end of our visit, both with regard to the intensification of bilateral relations and to the main international issues.

At the beginning of a trip by ■ party and state delegation of the GDR to several African countries in February 1979 I was able for the first time to make the first-hand acquaintance of an Islamic country, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, with which we share long-standing firm

traditions of common struggle. The talks with Muammar el Qadhafi yielded many stimuli for a collaboration serving the long-term mutual interests of our states and peoples. These stimuli are already being acted upon.

Our Libyan friends explained to us in detail their point of view with regard to the vital issues of the Arab peoples and to the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and establish their own independent state. The Arab peoples do not want to be the victims of imperialist aggression, of land-grabbing and humiliation any longer. We affirmed once more our full solidarity with their just struggle, and are acting accordingly. It is understandable that the Libyan people consider the socialist states strategic allies in their own national development.

During our stay in Libya we got a deep and lasting impression of how the state leadership is utilising the oil wealth as a means for fundamentally changing the country and the life of its inhabitants. We got to know the capital, Tripoli, as one great building site where apartment houses, schools, factories and cultural institutions were being built. In the former "valley of death" in the Libyan desert we saw how by means of irrigation and reclamation, by the construction of modern villages, a "valley of life" has been created.

In a joint declaration Muammar el Qadhafi and I agreed to draw up a treaty of friendship and cooperation between Libya and the GDR. Since then the exchange of economic delegations, scientists, technicians, artists, athletes and doctors has increased considerably. One can say that our countries and peoples are drawing closer to each other.

The memory of my visit to the People's Republic of Angola in February 1979 is still closely linked with the sadness at the untimely death of the country's president, Dr Agostinho Neto. We were linked by a personal friendship which dated back to the time when he was still directing the liberation struggle against colonial rule. His political farsightedness and his wisdom as a statesman, his deep feeling for the suffering and the yearning of his people for a better future, his passionate commitment to progress, found another kind of expression in his poems. Agostinho Neto made a great contribution to the independence of Angola, to the defence of freedom against foreign aggression and internal counterrevolution, to the building of a new life.

We convinced ourselves of the efforts being made by the young MPLA Party of Labour to solve the complicated problems of reconstruction. When visiting some factories and the port of Luanda, the Angolan capital, we saw

how difficult it is to develop the economy in such a country. The colonial rulers had kept the population in ignorance; they had thwarted the development of an indigenous technical intelligentsia. When they had to move out overnight they took their engineers, technicians and skilled workers with them.

Angola is certainly one of the richest countries in Africa. In order to utilise its wealth it urgently needs technicians and scientific experts. We were all the more pleased to learn from our hosts that the specialists from the GDR and the friendship brigades from our youth organisation, the "blue-shirt ambassadors" as we sometimes call them, were doing a solid, successful job in training Angolan friends.

The friendship between the GDR and the African countries is free from tactical considerations and national egoism. Its deep roots lie not least in its history. We stood by our friends long before their victory in their liberation battle. When we talk about "development aid" we mean it in the truest sense of the words, and we practise this aid accordingly. We help friendly nations to help themselves and to solve their problems. Therefore we support them at present primarily in the training of experts in the most varied fields. The once oppressed nations have a sure sense of who their real friends are, of who really respects their interests and of who only feigns such respect. Under colonialism they have been deceived for too long. They distinguish very clearly between those who only talk about human rights and those who practise them. That is the whole secret.

We had an equally cordial welcome from leading statesmen and the population of Angola as we had in the other frontline states of southern Africa. An instant *rapprochement* based on trust and understanding sprang up between Dr Kenneth Kaunda, president of the Republic of Zambia, and myself. Although I was meeting him for the first time during our visit I had the feeling that I had known him for a long time. Our talks were extraordinarily fruitful both where the intensification of bilateral relations and where joint actions in international affairs were concerned. This is confirmed by the joint declaration and a number of agreements.

Zambia's economy depends heavily on copper, and its unfavourable location without access to the sea, without its own traffic links to the outside world, exposes the country constantly to blackmail attempts by enemies of its independent, national and progressive development. This makes the consistent attitude of President Kaunda who has supported the liberation movement in southern Africa, particularly that of the people of Zimbabwe, with unshakeable solidarity, all the more deserving of credit.

During the stay in Zambia we visited Freedom House, the headquarters of the secretary general of the United National Independence Party (UNIP). A large crowd of people welcomed us in front of the building with genuine African high spirits. In a short speech I assured them of our firm support in the battle of the African people against imperialism, neocolonialism and racism. President Kaunda and Secretary General Mainza M. Chona told me later that this spontaneous gathering had given the people of Lusaka an important insight. If ■ white head of state identified himself so determinedly with the African freedom struggle, this meant that friend and foe could no longer be distinguished by colour of skin but by political action.

During our visits to the frontline states in February 1979 we met the leaders of the liberation movements in southern Africa, who are good old friends of ours. We assured the president of Namibia's SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, the president of Zimbabwe's ZANU and co-president of the Patriotic Front, Robert Mugabe, the president of ZAPU and co-president of the Patriotic Front, Joshua Nkomo, as well as the president of the ANC of South Africa, Oliver Tambo, that the GDR would continue to give full support to the just struggle of their peoples for freedom, independence and self-determination.

We got to know the extremely difficult situation and the complicated problems of those driven away from their homelands by the racist regimes. As the camp inhabitants reported, the numerous solidarity shipments from the GDR—food, clothes, medicines and other items—made their situation more bearable and strengthened them for further struggle. We shall continue to help to the best of our ability in future. Our full indignation is directed against the barbarism of the racists and their permanent violation of the sovereignty of Angola, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique.

The GDR consistently supports the political solution of all conflicts in the interest of peace and the right of the people to self-determination. At the same time, however, we consider it the sacred right of the people to defend themselves against imperialist aggression, to fight with everything they have for national and social liberation, and to determine their own fate.

In the People's Republic of Mozambique we were given an overwhelming reception by President Samora Machel and the population of Maputo, the country's capital. The climax of the visit and at the same time the logical consequence of the long-standing and traditional relations of our party and our people with the Frelimo party and the people of Mozambique, was the

signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between our countries.

Among our many experiences during our stay in Mozambique one in particular shall remain unforgettable for me: a friendship rally with tens of thousands of inhabitants of Bairros Chamanculo, an old African quarter of Maputo. Amidst the miserable huts made of straw and wood they received us with the songs of the liberation struggle. It was particularly interesting for me to experience the role these simple, catchy and tuneful songs play in the political mass movement in these countries.

My speech was first translated into Portuguese and then in groups all over the square into the various tribal languages. Samora Machel with whom I have a friendship which was founded during the first years of Frelimo's struggle, subsequently repeated the main points of my speech in the Ronga language, and so we all understood one another perfectly.

The energetic and dynamic efforts by the Frelimo party to make its policy understood by all the people and thus to mobilise them for the great tasks of national development is felt wherever one goes. We also saw the first significant successes on the socialist-oriented path. As in Angola and other African countries the training of experts and the battle against illiteracy are key issues in Mozambique too.

Over the years we have created the preconditions for a multifaceted collaboration between the GDR and the People's Republic of Mozambique. Specialists from our country, engineering products from the GDR, vehicles, agricultural technology and equipment for various important fields of the national economy are as much in demand and appreciated here as elsewhere in Africa.

Our African hosts were especially interested in our experience during the early years of democratic reconstruction: How we rooted out fascism, how we carried out the democratic reforms, the land reform, school reform and the expropriation of concerns and banks, how we built up the economy and organised its management and planning and established an antifascist and democratic state from scratch. We told them all they wanted to know without hiding the difficulties and problems involved.

In November 1979 I visited Socialist Ethiopia and thus returned a friendly visit by Mengistu Haile Mariam, chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council and the Council of Ministers, to our country a year earlier. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Socialist Ethiopia, the third to be concluded by the GDR with an African country, proves the

continuity of our Africa policy. Here in the oldest state of Africa social changes are taking place which were brought about by a thoroughgoing popular revolution. It is supported by the masses of peasants which are led by patriotic progressive military officers. The lessons of their own experience have induced them to join the socialist states and convinced them that the socialist way meets their vital interests. Their enemy is whoever mobilises the powers of the past again or wants to revive old conditions of dependence.

In Addis Ababa and during drives through the country we could see for ourselves with what enthusiasm the Ethiopian workers, peasants, soldiers and youth were working on overcoming the feudal-capitalist heritage, how determined they were to defend their revolution and how they were building up a new life for themselves. Time and again we saw among the people who lined the streets everywhere we went, banners reading: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Yes, we have stood firmly by the Ethiopian revolution in its darkest hours. We have helped it to defend itself, we have given food and supported it in word and deed when initial difficulties had to be overcome. This will not be forgotten in Ethiopia, and it is a stable foundation for the friendship between our nations.

In Addis Ababa, when visiting the General Secretariat of the OAU I set out the principles of our policy and our attitude to the most important African problems. In the presence of the chiefs of mission of the member states of the OAU their secretary general, Edem Kodjo, expressed appreciation for the "valuable contribution by the GDR to the liberation struggle in Africa".

A long tradition of friendship and solidarity which can be traced back to the beginnings of the armed liberation struggle of the Yemeni people against colonial rule unites us with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. In November 1979 our party and state delegation paid it a friendly visit. In talks with Abdel Fattah Ismail and other Yemeni leaders who are all old friends, during visits to factories and agricultural operations and educational institutions we got a vivid picture of the progress in this southern Arab country which was counted among the 25 poorest on earth. Specifically the complicated historical and geographical conditions prevailing there show what an important part a vanguard party with a scientifically based programme—like the Yemeni Socialist Party—plays in overcoming a difficult past and in creating a future of human dignity for the working people.

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between our countries determines our relations in all fields for many years to come. This is an expression of the GDR's solidarity with the struggle of all Arab peoples.

Special highlights in my travels overseas were the visits to countries where socialism has become a living and firmly established reality: socialist Cuba, the first socialist country on the American continent; the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, symbol of the vitality of socialism in Asia; and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In these countries, closely knit together in friendship, national liberation grew out of persistent anti-imperialist struggle into the development of the socialist society. Socialism has taken on firm contours. Firm brotherly ties and long-standing fruitful cooperation prove their value every day anew.

The diversity of the forms and ways in which nations come to socialism is made evident in these countries. The awareness of their freedom and the will to social progress mobilised forces which had been dormant in the people and enabled them to make the greatest sacrifices, to master seemingly invincible difficulties. What other country would have survived, like Cuba, the blockade by imperialism or, like Vietnam, the over thirty-years war against foreign usurpers with its almost unimaginable destruction? The Korean people rebuilt not only their completely destroyed capital to be more beautiful than ever before. Socialism has fully proved its vitality in these countries ■ well.

In spring 1974 I travelled to Cuba. I had formed a firm friendship with Fidel Castro, first secretary of Cuba's Communist Party and chairman of the State Council and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba two years earlier during his first visit to the GDR. Now he together with his vivacious people welcomed our delegation on the island of freedom which is rightly referred to as the greatest achievement of the revolutionary struggle in Latin America. The visit gave me an opportunity to get to know the splendid people of Cuba in their homeland. The personal talks with Fidel Castro mean very much to me; they deepen our close friendship every time.

While we had followed the Cuban revolution and the enthusiasm of the Cubans in building up their new life from afar with passionate involvement, the reality still by far exceeded what we had imagined. Placed against the undeniable background of a difficult heritage and the complicated conditions caused by the US-imposed blockade, the accomplishments of the new Cuba are even more impressive, whether one takes the construction of new industries and new residential areas, the transformation of agriculture or

the enormous progress in the health service or in public education. Only the socialist revolution made the "jewel of the Antilles" truly into the "most beautiful country that human eyes have ever seen"—to use Christopher Columbus' phrase—for the working people as well.

During all our travels through the country we experienced the brotherly feelings which the Cuban people have for the people of the GDR. Time and again expression was given to how much the Republic of Cuba and the GDR have in common despite all the differences in their conditions of development. Both countries are building socialism. Both are allied with the Soviet Union. Both are directly confronted with imperialism. And both had to fend off diplomatic and economic boycott as well as counterrevolutionary assaults by those who want to turn the clock back.

It was a great experience for us to see how scientific socialism was now becoming a reality in the country of José Martí, the pioneer of Cuban freedom and independence. The Cuban revolution proves impressively that socialism can also be built under the conditions prevailing in developing countries. Moreover, it shows that this is the way for a developing Latin American country successfully to follow the attainment of national with social liberation.

Very moving for myself and for all members of our delegation was the visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the late autumn of 1977. For the citizens of the GDR, even for the youngest, Vietnam has become a symbol of heroism, self-sacrifice and refusal to yield. The 30 years' struggle of these brave people against imperialist colonial rulers and aggressors, for freedom and independence was followed by us with heartfelt sympathy, and we did everything within our power to support our Vietnamese friends. We saw the terrible wounds that had been inflicted on these people by the barbaric war of aggression by US imperialism and which was still further aggravated by the burden of its colonial past. But we also felt—in the north as well as in the south of the country—the indomitable will to live, the clear-sighted optimism of the Vietnamese. In factories and in rural areas we saw with what resourcefulness this friendly nation was overcoming a multitude of difficulties.

In Hanoi we honoured the memory of Ho Chi Minh. "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom"—these words of his are inscribed on his final resting place. And the legacy of this great patriot and internationalist, the founder of the Communist Party of Indochina and first president of a free Vietnam, lives on in the whole nation.

Le Duan, the general secretary of our Vietnamese sister party, had been visiting the GDR just before the final victory of his people. Now I was able to present in Hanoi the congratulations of our whole people on this historic victory to our friend and comrade-in-arms. In Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon, we sat with men who only a few months earlier had directed from the jungle the last military operations for the destruction of the tyrannical Thieu régime and for the expulsion of its overseas backers.

At the end of our visit a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the GDR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was signed. Its significance consists in that it lays down the main directions of cooperation right into the coming millennium. This opened a new chapter in the extremely close and fraternal relations between our two peoples. It found expression in the cordiality with which the Vietnamese people surrounded us on every step of our visit.

Also in late autumn 1977 I travelled to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. For a long time we have had good and friendly relations with this socialist country. They developed during that difficult time in the fifties when the Korean people had to repel the aggression of US imperialism. At that time the GDR had contributed to the healing of war wounds and the reconstruction of the country as best it could.

In the comradely talks with Kim Il Sung, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party and president of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and in many encounters with the working people, this traditional friendship came to the fore. We in the GDR speak with great respect of the industriousness of the Korean people which is visible everywhere in the achievements of socialist development. The readiness of the people to defend what they have created with their own hard work against any attack is clearly visible.

I found the architectural layout of Pyongyang, which had to be rebuilt from scratch after the war, impressive. Many interesting ideas which combine old traditions with modern views have been found for the design of residential buildings. The loving care for the country's children by our Korean sister party and the government deserve special emphasis.

I have taken home with me from my travels deep impressions of the beauty and variety of people and landscapes, and of rich cultural traditions. Enormous riches lie dormant in the people and in the earth on which they dwell. Socialism will make them fully accessible.



**In conversation with Robert Maxwell,
Chairman of Pergamon Press Ltd,
in Berlin**

XXXIV

A dialogue on current political issues

Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the GDR Council of State, granted an interview to Robert Maxwell, Chairman of Pergamon Press Ltd and general editor of the series "LEADERS OF THE WORLD", in the offices of the party's Central Committee in Berlin on 6 February 1981.

Question: Following the inauguration of President Reagan in the USA, what steps would you like to see him take to improve relations between the GDR and the USA in particular and between the USA and the socialist countries in general?

Answer: In my telegram to mark the inauguration of the President of the USA, Ronald Reagan, I expressed the hope—coupled with my best wishes—that relations between the GDR and the United States of America would continue to develop on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, in the interests of the strengthening of world peace and for the benefit of our two peoples. As matters stand today, such a conduct of relations should be the first essential in international politics, for there can be no reasonable alternative to peaceful coexistence.

Arms limitation and disarmament are increasingly moving into the foreground. All constructive steps in that direction are meeting with our support. As you can deduce from what I have said we are in favour of normal, good relations between the USA and the socialist countries. This goes especially, as everyone will understand, for the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.

It is to be hoped that the recent proposals made by Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev on matters of arms limitation and disarmament will elicit a positive response on the part of President Reagan in the end. This would have a beneficial effect on the solution of the most urgent issues in the world, including the political solution of conflicts.

As far as the GDR and the USA are concerned, we have repeatedly expressed our readiness to use the manifold opportunities existing for the further development of bilateral relations, whether this be in the political, economic or cultural field. The normalisation of trade relations and the expansion of the system of treaties would be of great value. This would not only be in the interests of our two peoples, but conducive to an improvement of the international climate, détente and peace.

Question: The situation in Western industrial nations is more or less characterized by greatly increased unemployment, a measure of inflation and much-reduced expectations regarding their own exports in this year and in the next. How does this compare with the GDR's expectations in its plans for economic growth, employment and exports both in the current year and in 1982?

Answer: As you can see from the law on the 1981 national economic plan adopted by our supreme legislative body in December 1980, we have above all made great demands on ourselves. In keeping with the stable and dynamic development of our national economy over the last ten years, in which we recorded an average increase in our national income of 4.7 per cent per annum, we have fixed a target of 5 per cent for 1981. Manufacturing output is to go up by 5.8 per cent and labour productivity by 5 per cent. In individual sectors it will rise even faster—in electrical engineering and electronics by 7.7 per cent, in the machine-tool industry by 7.7 per cent and in farm engineering by 6.7 per cent. We expect our foreign trade turnover to rise by 16 per cent within the framework of international division of labour. Such growth rates are doubtless quite remarkable if one takes into

account that some Western industrial nations speak of "zero growth" or even "minus growth", with all the implications this has in terms of unemployment, inflation and soaring prices for the ordinary man.

The course mapped out by the GDR's supreme representative body to raise our people's material and cultural standard of living is made possible by the continued renewal of our production processes, primarily in industry. As a result, the net monetary income of the population will increase by 4 per cent and retail trade turnover also by 4 per cent, with prices for essential commodities remaining unchanged.

As you can see we are, in conformity with our economic strategy, pursuing the aim of offsetting the rising raw materials prices on the international market by raising labour productivity, i.e. by achieving a greater rise in economic performance increasingly based on the results of scientific and technological progress. In so doing we rely on the most important resource we have in our country—our highly skilled workers and cooperative farmers, our scientists and engineers—with our advanced education system making a very substantial contribution.

It is well known, and this is also true internationally, that the GDR has of late been able to achieve good results in utilising its own raw materials resources, in raising the efficiency of our large industrial combines and in applying such advanced techniques as microelectronics and robot technology. In particular, we are developing the growth sectors in the manufacturing and construction industries. We shall thus further raise the standing of our country in the mastery of advanced technologies and the production of goods with a high value-added content.

Our planned socialist economy enables us to focus all social energies on priorities. We can count on a high level of motivation among the working people who know from long-standing experience that economic advances in the GDR entail advances in the social field.

This is the way things are to develop not only in 1982, but up to the year 1985. However, this will be a matter for the 10th SED Congress to decide, which will meet in Berlin from 11 to 16 April 1981.

Question: The GDR is no less affected by the rising prices of oil and other raw materials than the economies of Western countries. Is the GDR, too, facing the prospect of an end to growth and, consequently, of a stagnant living standard for the population?

Answer: My answer is neither, although I would not consider it a tragedy, in view of world economic developments, if the annual growth rates envisaged until 1985 will not be as high as current estimates or, to use a scientific term, prognostications. Needless to say, price developments on the world market, especially as regards oil, natural gas and other raw materials, are not without effects on our national economy. However, the SED Central Committee and the Government of the GDR, basing themselves on material submitted by scientists, sat down sufficiently early in the full awareness of their responsibilities to analyse the probable changes and to draw the necessary conclusions for the strategy of our economic and social policy.

Our country is, indeed, relatively poorly endowed with raw materials and fuel. Yet in determining the prospects of its economic development we were able to proceed from the fact that we receive the bulk of our raw materials and fuel supplies from the Soviet Union. The extensive deliveries to be made under the next Five-Year Plan have been agreed for a long time. According to the provisions in force within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance the prices charged correspond to the 5-year average of prices on the principal capitalist markets. Accordingly, what we paid for oil in 1980 was half the amount that would have been charged by the oil companies.

Even so our spending on energy and raw materials is rising considerably. Our economic policy takes into account increases in the price of raw materials and fuel by raising industrial prices from time to time. This compels our factories and combines to seek greater economic efficiency. At the same time, our economic policy is such that increases in industrial prices do not affect retail prices. The retail prices charged for essential commodities, i.e. over 80 per cent of the goods put on the market, remain stable as do rents and service charges. You will be able to see this for yourself.

Question: What is your current position on state-to-state relations between the two Germanies? Do you think a further development of these relations is possible? What steps are conceivable?

Answer: Opportunities for further developing the relations between the two Germanies do exist. One reason is quite simply that these relations are currently not as they might be. Now as before, our position is that the relationship between the two German states is of importance not only for the citizens of the Federal Republic and the citizens of the GDR, but for peace and détente in Europe.

What steps are conceivable to further develop relations between the GDR and the FRG is difficult to say at the moment. As is well known, this is related to problems which are not always predictable for us. We do not know, for example, what steps the FRG considers possible in order to proceed, on a wider scale than has so far been the case, from generally accepted principles of international law in shaping its relations with the GDR. We, for our part, have appropriate steps in mind. Nor can one leave out of account here that, above all else, major progress towards the safeguarding of peace, for example in the field of arms limitation and disarmament, would be beneficial to relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic.

Question: Herr Honecker, in your Gera speech you made improvements in the relationship between the two Germanies conditional, amongst other things, on Bonn's recognizing GDR citizenship. Do you continue to adhere to this demand as a precondition for further talks and negotiations with the Federal Government? What would the GDR be prepared to offer in return for the recognition of its citizenship by the Federal Government?

Answer: Your question shows in what a distorted light the relations between the GDR and the FRG are presented in the Western world. We never raise preconditions for talks designed to help reduce tensions in the interests of peace and to normalize relations between states. It goes without saying that, as is common in international practice, such talks can only hold promise of success if conducted on the basis of equality and respect for the principle of equal security for all.

For the rest, the citizenship of the GDR is not a matter for negotiations between the GDR and the FRG. Every state has its own territory, frontiers and citizens. Every politician knows this, to say nothing of authorities on international law. The GDR is currently maintaining diplomatic relations with 131 states of the world. It is a member of the UN and its specialized agencies. It belongs to the non-permanent members of the Security Council of which it held the chair at one time. If the question of citizenship plays a role in the relations between the GDR and the FRG, this is only because in the FRG, contrary to all international law, the Citizenship Act dating from Wilhelm II's day is still supposed to be in force and the practice adopted towards GDR citizens is one of discrimination. This, of course, we will never accept.

As a result of the Second World War and of post-war developments two mutually independent, sovereign states have come into existence on German soil: the socialist GDR and the capitalist FRG. It is axiomatic that each has its own citizens, regardless of whether the FRG admits it or not. Its Citizenship Act, dating from the days of Wilhelm II, is antiquated, and much less can it apply to citizens of the GDR. In saying this we find ourselves in full agreement with international law. This is a fact that even politicians in the FRG, if they want to be taken seriously, cannot ignore. Indeed, we have noted with interest that leading politicians of both the governing coalition in Bonn and the Opposition have of late come to use the word *Bundesbürger*—meaning citizens of the Federal Republic—quite frequently. They are thus moving somewhat closer to the truth, all the legal subterfuges notwithstanding.

It is high time, therefore, for the existence of two mutually independent and sovereign German states to be recognized in the FRG. The *idée fixe* of the “continued existence of the German Reich in its 1937 frontiers” no longer brings any dividends today, nor can it serve as a guide to policy. The sooner this is realized in Bonn, the better it will be for the further normalisation of relations between the GDR and the FRG.

What is intriguing is that recently, especially after my Gera speech, more and more personalities in the FRG, representing all walks of life, have been advocating a realistic policy towards the GDR. They are in favour of a policy free from worn-out notions conducive to revanchist doctrines. Unless these notions are abandoned, no headway will be made in the development of relations between the GDR and the FRG, and there are bound to be ever new setbacks. We want to see the FRG adhering to what is the rule in international life, to what has been contractually stipulated, to what the Helsinki Final Act demands: fully to respect the sovereignty of other states, which in our case means the GDR.

There can be no question of a *quid pro quo* here. The further normalisation of relations between the GDR and the FRG itself will not only bring mutual advantages, but have a positive effect on the international situation. As is common practice, relations between two sovereign states are based on international law and can only be developed for mutual benefit. Neither within a state nor in international affairs is it customary to claim a bonus for the observance of laws. What is required is good will on both sides, respect for the existence of two German states. This is the crux of the matter. A sense of realism is indispensable.

Question: The GDR Government has in the main given economic rather than fundamental political reasons for the increase in the compulsory exchange requirement. Under what circumstances would the GDR be prepared to revoke that measure partly or completely?

Answer: First of all, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that there can be no question of an "increase in the compulsory exchange requirement by the GDR government". What is involved here, as can be seen from a decree issued by the Minister of Finance, Dr Schmieder, is a re-fixing of the minimum amount of foreign currency visitors to the GDR are required to change into GDR Marks, designed to counteract Western—especially Federal German—speculation with the currency of the GDR. You will know that the laws and decrees of our state do not permit anyone to take GDR Marks into the Western part of the world or *vice versa*. This, however, is ignored by the exchange bureaus in Berlin (West) and in the FRG. If they exchange one FRG Mark into five GDR Marks, they do so on the basis of a fake exchange rate enabling the exchange bureau operators to line their pockets at the expense of the GDR.

The re-fixing of the minimum exchange requirement applies only to visitors who intend to visit the GDR in conformity with the regulations in force. It goes without saying that, in the main, visitors will meet the costs connected with their stay themselves. For the rest, it should be added that as far as the minimum amount to be exchanged is concerned, the GDR is by no means at the head of the list, although this would not be unreasonable given the inflationary development in the Western countries. According to the most recent information, the minimum amount in the Polish People's Republic is 40 Marks per day, and in the Soviet Union it is 65 Marks. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has fixed the level at 25 Marks like the GDR, and the Socialist Republic of Romania at 24 Marks. As you can see, there are several countries which have laid down a minimum exchange requirement, and the levels are partly higher than in the GDR. So there is no special case involved here. Incidentally, many visitors to the GDR, rather than commit an offence by availing themselves of the services of Western exchange bureaus, prefer to exchange convertible currency into GDR Marks with the competent financial institutions of the GDR over and above the minimum amount required.

The minimum exchange requirement for visitors to the GDR was re-fixed, as you will certainly understand ■■ the strength of the facts, out of purely

economic considerations. We find it incomprehensible why such a hue and cry should have been raised about the matter. As far as I am informed, both Britain and the USA have an interest in visitors to their countries being supplied with enough money to finance their stay there. The same goes for the minimum amount required on visits to the GDR.

We are a hospitable country, but no one is obliged to visit us. Therefore, it is absolutely inappropriate to speak of a "compulsory" measure. In view of inflationary developments in the Western states it would, on purely financial grounds, make absolutely no sense to cancel the minimum requirement. After all, we cannot have every visitor checked to spot people smuggling GDR Marks into the GDR. Also, this would greatly impair travel.

Question: The increase in the minimum exchange requirement has made a visit to the GDR impossible or at least difficult for many West Germans, especially old-age pensioners, low-income groups, and working-class families as well. Must this not be seen as a measure designed to draw a clear line of demarcation against the Federal Republic?

Answer: Until now Western propaganda has always claimed that there are no low-income groups in the Federal Republic, that it has the richest old-age pensioners and the richest unemployed in the world. And suddenly you find low-income groups there. This, however, is not our fault. If I remember rightly, only recently a proposed increase in pensions was turned down by the Bundestag in the FRG. But this is an affair of the Federal Republic in which I do not want to interfere. Let me just say this much about it: The previous practice—and this is a matter only our Government can decide—was to the disadvantage of the citizens of the GDR. It is the task of our Government to safeguard their interests, and our social welfare programme is designed to increase the prosperity of the GDR's citizens who are laying the groundwork through their diligent work. We are not responsible for subsidising visits from the Western part of the world into the GDR. By the way, the decree issued by the GDR Minister of Finance on the minimum exchange requirement stipulates that children up to the age of six are allowed to enter the country without any exchange requirement and young people aged between six and fifteen have to exchange only 7.50 DM. So all this has nothing to do with demarcation.

Question: At a closed meeting in Bonn. Social Democratic leaders made progress in negotiations conditional on the GDR's readiness to revoke the

minimum exchange requirement at least in part. Could this serve as a basis for political deals between the two German governments?

Answer: What was discussed at the closed meeting you mentioned I do not know. Insofar as you know me—and you are after all publishing my autobiography—you must know that I am not prepared to talk to anybody who raises preconditions.

Question: You have personally commended Bonn's representative in East Berlin, Günter Gaus, for the competent job he has done. Klaus Bölling, the new head of mission, is far closer to the Federal Chancellor than his predecessor. Do you see this as an advantage in the further normalisation of relations between the two German states?

Answer: Whether the new head of mission, Mr Klaus Bölling, is far closer to the Federal Chancellor than his predecessor is something I do not know. What is crucial for the further normalisation of relations between the GDR and the FRG is that both sides act on the premise that these are relations between states with differing social systems.

Question: Am I right in assuming that your Government and the Government of Federal Chancellor Schmidt are now as before guided by a common desire not to allow the stability and détente achieved in Europe to be wiped out by international tensions?

Answer: The Government of the GDR remains interested in preserving the stability achieved in Europe as a result of the process of détente. I think we are not wrong in assuming that safeguarding all that has been achieved on a lasting basis makes it necessary to back up political détente with military détente. Unfortunately, the signs in this area—just think of NATO's arms build—up—are not very hopeful.

As I told you already at an earlier date, NATO's arms build—up, for which the USA and the FRG bear primary responsibility, poses a threat to peace as it is designed to alter the military balance to the disadvantage of the socialist community. Whether the Government of Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt agrees with me is at best questionable in the light of the recent debate in the Bundestag. According to the stenographic record of the

Bundestag debates there was a wide measure of agreement between the governing parties and the Opposition on the issue of the Brussels missile decision of 1979, the NATO long-term programme of 1978, the non-ratification of the SALT-2 Treaty, and the new nuclear strategy of the United States.

Every statesman is confronted with the choice of whether to pursue an active policy of peace, arms limitation and disarmament on the basis of a military equilibrium and cooperation or whether to contribute to stepping up the arms race with all the dangers it involves, through a build-up of military might. This is the pivotal issue of our time, and the approach a statesman adopts towards this issue will be the yardstick by which to measure him.

Question: The hardening of the GDR's attitude towards Bonn is explained in the West as a consequence of the unstable situation in Poland. To what extent is that correct?

Answer: Not at all. There has been no hardening of the GDR's attitude towards Bonn. Now as before we are prepared to continue normalising the relations between the GDR and the FRG and to arrive at good neighbourly relations in keeping with the principles of peaceful coexistence. After the most recent events, however, it would appear that it is necessary in the FRG to break down prejudices against the GDR. I find myself in agreement here with all those who reject the idea that, in defiance of reality, one should still find it impossible in the FRG, after two mutually independent and sovereign German states have been in existence for 31 years, to bring oneself to recognize the GDR. It goes without saying that nobody still obsessed with the fiction of the "continued existence of the German Reich within its 1937 frontiers" can see the world as it is today or draw the necessary conclusions for his political practice.

As you can see for yourself, all this has nothing to do with the current situation in Poland. In fact, I share the view that the publicity extravaganza staged by the Western—above all Federal German—mass media over events in Poland not only constitutes interference in the internal affairs of the Polish People's Republic but also favours international tensions.

Question: Economic aid to Poland and additional strains resulting for the GDR from the current events in the Polish People's Republic: The Western

press has accused the GDR of negative attitudes towards the recent events in Poland, reproaching it with adopting a politically aggressive stance. Could you give some facts and figures to show what economic aid the GDR has granted the Polish People's Republic in order to help it resolve its economic crisis and what are the implications for the GDR of declining production in Poland and the resulting non-observance of contracts in the energy sector and elsewhere?

Answer: It is no secret that the GDR is following current events in the Polish People's Republic with more than ordinary interest. We are Warsaw Pact allies, and we have a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance valid well beyond the year 2000. It was a matter of course for us to grant the Polish party and state leadership not only political and moral support, but material aid as well to help it overcome the current difficulties. All the more so as the representatives of People's Poland declared at the December 1980 meeting of the leaders of socialist countries that People's Poland was, is and remains socialist.

Frankly, I do not care about what the Western press writes about the relationship between the GDR and People's Poland. Those are the people who would like to erase the memory of Maidanek and Auschwitz.

Our Republic can claim credit for having recently granted the Polish People's Republic additional aid worth over 500 million marks, including 250 million in freely convertible currency. So far our foreign trade has been able to offset the fall-off in Polish supplies. And I think that in view of the GDR's dynamic economy this will remain so.

Question: In what areas do you see opportunities for additional contractual agreements between the two German states?

Answer: There is a good deal that could be initiated. This concerns, first and foremost, efforts towards peace and disarmament as well as questions of economic cooperation, transport, science and other spheres. However, no headway will be made if the signals point to confrontation. Hence common sense and realism are needed more than ever.

Question: No basic foreign policy statement on your part has been published since your Gera speech. Officials of your party have already been speaking of foreign policy speechlessness. What is the reason for this restraint?

Answer: I do not know who told you this. If anything, foreign policy speechlessness seems to have befallen those who are not following world developments and who are not prepared to advocate genuine arms limitation and disarmament, those who refuse to enter into negotiations on that issue on the basis of equality and equal security for all.

Question: A couple of days ago Amnesty International, for the third time since 1966, published a documentary report accusing the GDR of violating international treaties which you have signed yourself. This includes the covenant on civil and political rights ratified in 1973 and the Helsinki Final Act. What is your answer to this charge? According to Amnesty International between 3,000 and 7,000 GDR citizens are in custody because they wanted to leave their country. Is this true, and are there political prisoners in the GDR?

Answer: This organization appears to be one of a myriad of associations in the West which are financed from obscure sources and which have made it their task to discredit decent states. Please take a look at our Constitution and at the laws of the GDR. You will find that the principles of international law have been enshrined in the Constitution.

The statement that 3,000 to 7,000 GDR citizens are currently in custody on political grounds is quite simply ■ blatant lie. The difference of 4,000 alone shows the seriousness of these people's approach to such matters.

For the rest, you may rest assured that all our citizens are equal before the law. Since the last amnesty in 1979 there has been no single political prisoner in this country.

Question: During your state visit to Austria you expressed the hope for increased cultural exchanges between the two countries, that is between the GDR and Austria, and held out the prospect of improved tourism for young people. Will there be more rapid progress in the relations between Austria and the GDR than between the Federal Republic and the GDR?

Answer: The favourable development of relations between the GDR and the Republic of Austria arises from the constructive approach adopted by both sides towards the most important international and bilateral questions. It is a matter of course that in future, too, good and fast progress will be made in our relations with those states which conduct their relations

with the GDR in a spirit of full mutual respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in keeping with the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

Question: Can one take it for granted that the GDR delegation, at the Madrid meeting resumed in late January, will take some positive initiatives that will enable the conference to achieve some results?

Answer: Everything that depends on the GDR, on the socialist countries, will be done. You can take that for granted. I see enough starting points for concluding the Madrid meeting with good results. To this end the GDR and the other socialist states have so far submitted almost 50 constructive proposals covering all the "baskets" of the Helsinki Final Act.

Measures aimed at military détente in Europe are doubtless of prime importance. Therefore, we endorse the proposal submitted by the Polish People's Republic to agree in Madrid on a mandate for the summoning of a conference on military détente and disarmament in Europe. The socialist countries are prepared for a businesslike discussion of all considerations and proposals. Differing viewpoints cannot and must not be an obstacle to an agreement on the holding of such a conference.

We have also submitted constructive proposals in the fields of economic and humanitarian cooperation. I am thinking, among other things, of the convocation of a European energy congress, the strengthening of the role of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the promotion of trade, the conclusion of cultural agreements, and cooperation between youth organisations.

A successful outcome of the Madrid meeting requires that all participants adopt a constructive approach and refrain from public relations exercises and confrontation.

Question: How do you feel about the state of relations between the GDR and Britain and the prospects for their further development?

Answer: Relations between the GDR and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are following a positive course. The development of trade has been very good, and I believe that the forthcoming Leipzig Spring Fair will offer opportunities for further agreements. Relations in the cultural field have been improving lately. The indications are that the

development of cultural exchanges, too, will lead to a higher level of relations between the GDR and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Our Foreign Ministry maintains close contacts with the British Foreign Office, especially in connection with the Madrid conference.

Question: How do you view your forthcoming visit to Japan in terms of the further development of bilateral relations?

Answer: My visit will doubtless be of great importance for the development of relations between the GDR and Japan and, at the same time, contribute to the implementation of the policy of peaceful coexistence. As you know, good relations have long been evolving between our two countries, in both the economic and cultural spheres. Recently, there has been an intensification of the political dialogue between the GDR and Japan. It is safe to say even at this moment that my visit will not only be an opportunity to get to know the country and its people, but will also lead to a further stabilisation of the friendly ties linking the GDR and Japan.

Question: You will be paying a state visit to Mexico in the near future. What are your expectations?

Answer: My visit will be in response to an invitation from the Mexican President, Señor López Portillo. I will be making it in the course of this year. It will be a good opportunity to get to know at first hand a large and important country with which we are maintaining friendly relations.

Our two states are interested in forging ahead along the proven path of deepening cooperation to our mutual advantage, a path which we have successfully pursued for the last few years. In our view the conditions are favourable. I fully agree with President López Portillo, who in a recent interview assessed our relations as potentially very fruitful.

Given similar or shared positions of the two states on important issues of international politics, I am looking forward with great interest to the talks and the exchange of opinion with the Mexican President. I am certain that our meeting will be a valuable contribution to international understanding and to the safeguarding of peace.

Plates



*The house of the Honecker family in Wiebelskirchen,
64 Wilhelmstrasse, now 88 Kuchenbergstrasse, 1965.*



*Erich Honecker (2nd row, l.) with other members
of the Young Communist League of Germany, Wiebelskirchen 1931.
Fritz Bäsel is seen in the centre of the first row and his wife Else on the right.*



Official credential as a fighter against fascism,
15 September 1945.



First national conference of the Communist Party of Germany in Berlin, 2—3 March 1946,
at which Erich Honecker (far left)
was elected to the Central Committee.



*National reunion in Berlin, 31 May 1950
(From r. to l.: Wilhelm Pieck, Margot Feist, and Erich Honecker).*



Helping to clear away the rubble in Berlin.



The author's parents, Wilhelm and Karoline Honecker, during one of their last visits to Berlin.



Second meeting of the International Committee for the 3rd World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin. The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and his wife (r.) in conversation with Erich Honecker, May 1951.



Talking to GDR border guards, 15 September 1961.



The delegation of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany attending the International Conference of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, June 1969. (From r. to l.: Friedrich Ebert, Erich Honecker, Walter Ulbricht, Hermann Matern, and Hermann Axen).



Daughter Erika, 1971.



Daughter Sonja, 1971.



On a hunting trip, 1971.



*Being awarded the honorary title of "Veteran of Magnitogorsk"
at a meeting in the V. I. Lenin Metallurgical Complex in Magnitogorsk, 4 April 1971.
(From l. to r.: Erich Honecker, Willi Stoph, and Paul Verner).*



*At a reception given for the chairmen of the allied parties
and for the President of the National Council
of the National Front of the German Democratic Republic.
(From l. to r.: Heinrich Homann, NDPD; Erich Correns, President of the
National Council; Manfred Gerlach, LDPD; Ernst Goldenbaum, DBD;
Gerald Götting, CDU; Erich Honecker and Albert Norden, 4 November 1971).*



Cordial meeting between (from l. to r.) Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Yakubovski, Erich Honecker and General Heinz Hoffmann, Berlin, 23 February 1972.



Reception given by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany to mark the 25th anniversary of the Women's Democratic League of Germany, 8 March 1972.



Inspecting farmland in the Dedelow rural district, June 1972.

*(From r. to l.: Friedrich Clermont,
member of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic
and head of the Dedelow crop production unit;
Erich Honecker, Margarete Müller, Johannes Chemnitzer and Gerhard Grüneberg).*



*Erich Honecker receives the Order of Lenin from the hands of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev,
13 May 1973.*



*During the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin.
Erich Honecker meets with Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the
Executive Committee
of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), 3 August 1973.*



*Exchange of views with parliamentary leaders
from the Federal Republic of Germany visiting
the German Democratic Republic, 31 May 1973.*

Shown on the left is Herbert Wehner, SPD, and on the right, Wolfgang Mischnick, FDP.



*Two keen hunters comparing notes:
Erich Honecker and Marshal of the Soviet Union Viktor Kulikov
in the German Democratic Republic, autumn 1973.*



*Erich Honecker confers the Order of Karl Marx
on Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, 6 October 1974.*



*Exchange of views between Erich Honecker and Dr Kurt Waldheim,
Secretary-General of the United Nations, Berlin, 7 February 1975.*



With Fidel Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Cuba, during a visit to the Republic of Cuba in February 1974.



*At a banquet for delegation leaders at the Helsinki conference,
30 July 1975.*

*(From l. to r.: Gerald Ford, President of the United States of America;
Erich Honecker; Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany;
Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations;
and Dr Urho Kekkonen, President of the Republic of Finland).*



*In conversation with Mgr Agostino Casaroli,
Secretary of the Vatican Council for Public Affairs of the Church,
Helsinki, 1 August 1975.*



*Erich Honecker explaining party and state policy
to young soldiers, 11 September 1975.
From l. to r.: Col.-Gen. Herbert Scheibe, Col.-Gen. Erich Mielke,
Gen. Heinz Hoffmann, Lt.-Gen. Wolfgang Reinhold,
and Lt.-Gen. Fritz Streletz.*



*After signing the Treaty of Friendship,
Cooperation and Mutual Assistance
between the German Democratic Republic
and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Moscow,
7 October 1975.*



Meeting with pitmen from the Werra potash works in Merkers, 16 January 1976.



*Ernst Thälmann Pioneers
salute the delegates attending the 9th Congress
of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany
at the Palace of the Republic in Berlin,
May 1976.*



*During a lively conversation with Josip Broz Tito,
Chairman of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia
and President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,
Berlin, 27 June 1976.*



*Erich Honecker giving the welcoming address at the Conference of Communist
and Workers' Parties of Europe in Berlin, 29 June 1976.*



*Erich Honecker receives Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister of the Republic of India,
at the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany,
1 July 1976.*



Inspecting the guard of honour on his election as Chariman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, 29 October 1976.



With Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile, during a solidarity rally for an antifascist Chile at the Palace of the Republic, Berlin, 29 January 1977.



*Erich Honecker and Ernst Busch exchange friendly greetings
at the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic,
17 February 1977.*



*The author taking a stroll with his wife, Margot,
his daughter, Sonja, and his grandson, Roberto, 1977.*



*The members and candidates
of the Politbureau elected by the 9th Congress
of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany,
August 1977.*



*During a cordial talk with fellow-fighters of the antifascist Resistance,
25 August 1977
(1st row from l. to r.: Artur Mannbar, Max Frenzel, and Wilhelm Thiele).*



*Finland's President
Dr Urho Kekkonen
on his visit to the
German Democratic Republic,
9 September 1977.*



*Erich Honecker
is welcomed in Hanoi by Le Duan,
General Secretary of the Central
Committee of the Communist Party
of Vietnam, 1 December 1977.*



*Ferdinand E. Marcos, President of the Philippines, bids farewell
to the party and state delegation from the German Democratic
Republic at Manila airport, 8 December 1977.*



*The author being received at the presidential palace in New Delhi
by India's head of state, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy,
8 January 1979.*



A frank exchange of views at the Bertolt-Brecht-Haus in Berlin's Chausseestrasse, February 1978. (From l. to r.: Ekkehard Schall, Barbara Schall-Brecht, Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann and Gisela May).



Erich Honecker with cosmonauts Sigmund Jähn (2nd from l.) and Valeri Bykovski (2nd from r.) viewing a scale model of Berlin, 21 September 1978.



Muammar el Qadhafi, General Secretary of the General People's Congress of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, says farewell to Erich Honecker, Tripoli, 17 February 1979.



Erich Honecker and Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA-Party of Labour and President of the People's Republic of Angola, after signing the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the German Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Angola at Futungo de Belas near Luanda, 19 February 1979. Seen on the right is Jose Eduardo dos Santos.



*In conversation with Dr Kenneth Kaunda,
President of the United National Independence Party and President
of the Republic of Zambia, in Lusaka, 21 February 1979.*



*The party and state delegation
of the German Democratic Republic is welcomed in Maputo by Samora Moises Machel,
President of the FRELIMO Party
and President of the People's Republic of Mozambique,
22 February 1979.*



*Erich Honecker in conversation with Jean François-Poncet,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic,
in Berlin, 24 July 1979.*



*Erich Honecker with former youth officials outside
the Palais Unter den Linden in Berlin, 25 May 1979.*



*Lenin Pioneers welcome Erich Honecker
and other party and state
leaders visiting a garrison of the Group
of Soviet Armed Forces in Germany,
19 September 1979.*

*(Gen. Yevgeni Ivanovski, 2nd from r.; Joachim Herrmann, far left;
Werner Krolikowski, 2nd from l.).*



*A visit to the Cosmonaut Centre
of the newly opened Ernst Thälmann Pioneer Palace in Berlin, 3 October 1979.*



At a festive function held in Berlin on 6 October 1979 to mark the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev announced new steps of worldwide political significance by the Soviet Union in favour of peace and disarmament, including the unilateral reduction of Soviet troops in Central Europe. He said that within the next twelve months up to 20,000 Soviet military personnel, 1,000 tanks and a certain amount of other military equipment would be withdrawn from the territory of the German Democratic Republic.



Torchlight procession of the Free German Youth on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic in Unter den Linden, Berlin, 6 October 1979.



*Among workers of the Buna chemical plant,
March 1980.*

Appendices

Address delivered at a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the GDR

Friends and Comrades,
Distinguished foreign guests,
Ladies and gentlemen of the Diplomatic Corps,

We have assembled here on this festive occasion to observe, together with our friends from abroad, the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic. It is now thirty years since the German Democratic Republic was founded at a time of sweeping changes in the world. The establishment of the first socialist Workers' and Peasants' State on German soil is one of the tremendous transformations that occurred during the post-war era, with the founding of the GDR marking a major culminating point.

Thirty years of the German Democratic Republic—these have been 30 years of struggle for peace and socialism furnishing convincing proof of the irresistible force of Marxism-Leninism. The very fact that our Republic has come into being in the native land of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and that it is firmly ensconced in the great community of socialist states makes it plain that we are living in an era in which more and more nations are embarking on the road to socialism.

Thirty years of the German Democratic Republic—these have been 30

years of fulfilment of the historic mission of the working class on German soil. In these three decades our people, led by the working class and its Party, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, have wrought far-reaching revolutionary changes in all spheres of life. Our state has literally risen from the ruins. What lies behind is ■ period of hard work involving many sacrifices and constant bitter class struggle against imperialism. From the rubble left behind by the Second World War, which had been so outrageously unleashed by the Hitler clique at the behest of German monopoly capital, there grew up a state which has learned the lessons of history and which will forever be part of the family of free nations, of the world of socialism.

More impressively than ever before, present-day realities show that on German soil, too, socialism is proving its historical superiority as the social system which alone is capable of ensuring human dignity, a secure way of life and freedom from anxiety for all, and of guaranteeing genuine freedom, democracy and human rights. The German Democratic Republic has evolved as a state which puts the needs of the people first, as a state committed to progress, whose path into the future lies clear. We can say with good reason that the German Democratic Republic represents the first state in the history of the German people which is ■ true homeland for all working people.

We are very happy to see that on the occasion of our 30th anniversary many friends of the German Democratic Republic from abroad, close allies and staunch comrades-in-arms, are amongst us. May I, dear Comrade Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and distinguished guests from the countries of the socialist community and from all over the world, in this hour place on record our heartfelt gratitude. Let me thank you for the solidarity that has been extended to our German Democratic Republic in these three decades, particularly as regards the consolidation of its international position. Let me thank you for the fruitful cooperation that has taken place in a multitude of areas, from economy, science and culture to defence and foreign policy. And last but not least, let me thank you for the many valuable activities that have been organised in your respective countries to mark the anniversary of our Republic ■ if it were your own. All this has strengthened our people's resolve to continue to contribute with all their might towards new successes for the world of socialism, for that world which is giving such powerful impetus to the battle for peace and progress, for national liberation and for the social emancipation of peoples.

The three decades the German Democratic Republic has been in existence strikingly underline the fact that the founding of our state marked a turning-point in the history of our people and in that of Europe. This was an unmistakable sign that the victorious march of socialism had reached German soil too, and marked a severe setback for imperialism in an area which had once been one of its strongpoints and centres of aggression. For the first time a state had come into being which was no longer ruled by capitalist exploiters but by workers and farmers. Imperialism, militarism and revanchism were eliminated root and branch and the class privileges of the capitalist era abolished. Here the people is truly sovereign. It is master of its own fate, develops its creativity for its own benefit and in conformity with the vital interests of all peace-loving peoples. What the people's hands have wrought belongs to the people.

The founding and successful development of the German Democratic Republic rest on stable and indestructible foundations. As a result of its victory over fascism on the decisive front of the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War and its imperishable feat of liberation the Soviet Union opened the road to a happy future for our people, too. We shall always honour the memory of the 20 million sons and daughters of the Soviet land who gave their lives for the freedom of the world's peoples. The legacy of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War has been carried out here and the historic opportunity presented by liberation was seized. What the anti-fascist resistance fighters bravely and steadfastly gave their entire strength for and risked their lives for in the underground, in the prisons and concentration camps of the Hitler régime and in exile, has become a reality in the German Democratic Republic. Three decades have proved that their heritage is in reliable hands and we are glad that our young people are continuing the work of their fathers in a worthy manner.

One of the fundamental achievements we succeeded in bringing about after the liberation from fascism was the unification, on a revolutionary basis, of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) to become the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) with which the disastrous split in the working class was overcome. This enabled the working class to fulfil its historic responsibility. It concluded a firm alliance with all other classes and strata and managed to unite the working people. Without all this the recovery of our country from the chaos of the early post-war period and the removal of the material and spiritual ruins would no more have been possible than the successes in

reconstruction. A socialist society has been created fully in keeping with the needs of our times.

Our state is the embodiment of the new, socialist Germany. It is the Germany of great revolutionary traditions. This is where we are putting into practice what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin and Franz Mehring, Ernst Thälmann and Rudolf Breitscheid, strove for and fought for. We are continuing the work begun jointly by Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht and Max Fechner in 1945. What the great German humanists yearned for has become a social reality in this country.

We are indeed on firm foundations if we state that there has never before been a state in German history in which the people could breathe so freely, in which they could open up the wellsprings of social wealth for themselves and in which they were able to utilise and increase all material and spiritual resources for their own benefit as in our Workers' and Peasants' State. In the German Democratic Republic human rights, above all the right to work, to education, to recreation and good health and the right to material security, are not only constitutional principles but a fact of life. Every citizen is called upon to join in working, planning and governing. This is real democracy, socialist democracy. In our country nothing happens for its own sake but, in keeping with the GDR's Constitution, all energies are bent towards the achievement of a happy and peaceful life for the people.

It is with justified pride that the people of our country are looking back on what has been achieved by joint effort in three decades and on the basic changes which have come about for the better in their lives. It has been a successful if not an easy road we have trodden since those days in October 1949. We have had to overcome not a few difficulties, had to solve many new problems and put up with many privations. During those years there was no lack of attempts on the part of imperialism, emanating mainly from the Federal Republic of Germany, to turn back the wheel of history, to "roll back" socialism from German soil and to wipe the German Democratic Republic off the map of Europe. Imperialism showed itself ready to go to any lengths in its efforts to blackmail our Workers' and Peasants' State and to ruin and discredit it. It missed no opportunity of interfering where its writ no longer ran. But all to no avail. Our socialist German Democratic Republic emerged as victor in this hard class struggle and all imperialist attacks have failed dismally.

Supported by the indestructible alliance with the Soviet Union and the

other fraternal countries we have forged steadily ahead from decade to decade. The German Democratic Republic is a politically stable, economically sound and internationally recognised and respected state. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the Council of State and the Council of Ministers would like to express their hearty thanks to our people for the tremendous efforts which have made possible such tremendous achievements. We would like to express our gratitude to the working class, the cooperative farmers, the intelligentsia and all working people, to women, to young people, to the members and leaders of the parties and mass organisations affiliated to the National Front, and to the members of the National People's Army and the country's other defence and security forces. We thank all citizens who have, irrespective of their personal convictions or religious beliefs, done their best in a variety of ways for the flourishing of our country and our socialist society.

It is with special warmth that we thank the pioneers of our Republic, the activists of the first hour, the pioneers of the activist and emulation movement in our country and not least all those many women who lent a hand at the difficult start to clear the ruins left by war and who made reconstruction possible. At a time when resignation and pessimism were rife among many, they were fully convinced that great things could be achieved by the strength of the working people. Today we are in a position to state that the result has far exceeded the expectations of those days.

Thanks, recognition and tribute are due to all those who have made their contribution to the impressive record of our German Democratic Republic. This applies particularly also to the millions of citizens who have diligently worked in socialist emulation, in the mass movement in preparation for the 30th anniversary and achieved outstanding results. We are thus continuing to implement successfully the central policy decided on by the 9th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the programme of growth, prosperity and stability. We are strengthening our socialist German Democratic Republic and are making an effective contribution to the cause of peace.

When the German Democratic Republic was founded the profound revolutionary changes in our country had brought us to the beginning of its socialist development. We had brought about public ownership of the means of production and this proved its worth. Land reform had put an end to the rule of the *Junkers* and fulfilled the age-old dreams of the peasants. The Two-Year Plan, the activist movement, the machine hiring stations in the

villages, and the workers' and peasants' faculties and also the state trading organisation (HO) were novelties in the life of the people.

Then the very first steps in the direction of a socialist planned economy were being taken. Destruction resulting from war was still holding back production. Labour productivity in industry was still noticeably below its pre-war level. The balanced economic structure, which had developed in the course of history, had been torn apart as a result of the splitting of Germany by the imperialists.

Today, the GDR ranks among the ten most highly developed industrial nations in the world. Socialist relations of production, for a long time now the sole basis of production, were perfected constantly and have achieved an advanced level. We have created a strong material and technological basis whose structures are determined not only by traditional branches of industry but also by those which never existed here before. As the owners of the means of production, the working class and the entire people have largely created a new material basis of production and have proved themselves to be the creators of new productive forces and spiritual values.

Then much still remained to be done in agriculture, just as elsewhere, to heal the wounds of war. Yields were inadequate to feed the people. The picture presented by the countryside was one of narrow strips of land owned by private smallholders. Today the huge areas cultivated by cooperative and state farms are in themselves signs of the changes that have occurred in the social structure and in production. Our well-developed socialist agriculture makes us largely self-sufficient in food and makes it possible to raise gradually standards regarding working conditions, education and culture in rural areas to match those prevailing in the towns.

Then our towns and villages still bore the scars left behind by the war. Today they are thriving communities, displaying the characteristics of our new life. We have set about solving the housing question as an issue of social relevance by 1990 on the basis of our largest ever housing programme, which was adopted at the 9th Party Congress. A major objective of the working-class movement is thus becoming reality. Socialism is accomplishing what capitalism, wherever it exists, is incapable of achieving.

Then we had only just taken the first important steps in the democratic school reform which did away with the educational privileges of the well-to-do. Together with the new teachers a new spirit entered the classroom, but all this was merely the beginning. Today young people of various age groups have been moulded by our socialist education system of which the

ten-year general polytechnical school is the backbone. The doors to the treasure house of knowledge have been flung open to all children whom our schools are equipping for a communist future.

The progress recorded here has found a parallel in the intellectual and cultural life of the country, in the realm of art and in the field of health. The balance-sheet that is being drawn up in town and country in these days is evidence of fundamental changes in all areas of national life.

What has been said about the inner strength of the socialist German state is no less true of its international standing. Then the monopolists, the proponents of the "Hallstein doctrine" and those who claimed to represent all Germans deemed it possible to deny our Workers' and Peasants State its rightful place as an equal member of the world community. Acting in a truly fraternal spirit, the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries admitted our young Republic into their community, always standing by its side in the struggle against the diplomatic blockade the imperialists imposed on it. Many friends of the German Democratic Republic throughout the world and in various political camps professed solidarity with us because even then they looked upon our state as a factor for stabilising peace in Europe. Today the German Democratic Republic, being an integral part of the socialist family of nations, plays an active role in international affairs and in worldwide economic relations. It has become a member of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. 128 countries maintain diplomatic relations with it.

Every Five-Year Plan added new major achievements to the 30-year record of our socialist state. The seventies, in which we undertook to build an advanced socialist society, witnessed new and important strides forward. They provide compelling evidence that it is the be-all and end-all of socialism to serve the needs of the people. The working people's response to the closer synthesis of economic and social policies has been approval and an upsurge of initiative in production. We are increasingly successful in combining the advantages of socialism with the scientific-technological revolution and in significantly boosting levels of output. This is bearing rich fruit for both the community and the individual. Indeed, it is safe to say that a new, higher level has been attained during the current decade in satisfying the material and cultural needs of the people.

Reviewing what we have achieved since the founding year of the German Democratic Republic, we are filled with pride at the outstanding results due to the initiative and application of the people. The national income produced

in 1949 amounted to 22,400 million marks. By 1978 it had risen to over 161,000 million. This works out at 1,187 marks per head of the population in the founding year of the GDR as compared with 9,617 marks in 1978. Whereas in 1949 the daily output of manufactured goods was valued at 100 million marks, the corresponding figure last year was 1,000 million.

Here are a few more comparisons. Capital investment rose from 2,800 to 50,800 million marks between 1949 and 1978, while construction output went up from 3,300 million to 28,800 million marks. In the first year of the GDR's existence the grain yield per hectare was 1.8 tonnes. This year's figure will exceed 3.5 tonnes. As recently as 1952 our merchant fleet consisted of a single vessel. In 1978 196 ships were flying the GDR flag. Whereas in 1956 our airlines operated only five routes, last year's figure was 53.

The results of our labours brought improvements in the living conditions of the people as borne out by the rise in retail trade turnover. In 1949, the year the Republic was proclaimed, retail sales added up to 13,800 million marks. By 1978 they had reached an impressive 92,500 million marks, a figure almost seven times as high as three decades ago. Housing conditions are a factor of great moment for the well-being of the people, and this in fact determines the place accorded to this matter in our social policy. The number of dwellings built in 1949 was 29,800 and that built or modernised in 1970 was 76,100. The level attained last year was 167,800.

Impressive as those figures are, they can only partially mirror the extent of the changes socialism has generated. The economic weight of our country has multiplied in these three decades, its economy assuming proportions it has never known before. Job security, free access to education and employment, wide-ranging welfare schemes for families, free medical care and a concern for the well-being of the retired population: all this adds up to a climate of economic security and confidence in the future which is specific to socialism. Here the working people and their work command a measure of respect that would be inconceivable in any exploitative system.

One of the most important accomplishments of our Republic is the equality of men and women. Much has been done to enable women to make ever fuller use of the opportunities society offers them and to reconcile their desire to hold a job with their wish to bring up children.

The younger generation are given special attention under socialism. Their road to adult life rests on firm foundations. Society places full confidence in them and entrusts them with major responsibilities. With the Free German

Youth in the van, our young people are proving their mettle on all important sectors of socialist construction. The link which has been forged in three decades of socialist revolution between the Party and the Free German Youth, between socialism and youth, is indestructible. It represents an inestimable asset which we are passing on from generation to generation. It is in practical life that the abilities and moral qualities of the young citizens of this country are put to the test. What a glaring contrast to the crisis-ridden world of capitalism where young people are often the stepchildren of society, where they are denied vocational training and employment and where they are exposed to delinquency and drug abuse.

There is no place on this earth where capitalism has provided a secure way of life for the working people. On the contrary. It has preserved the exploitation of man by man and even if it has assumed a new guise, it remains a fact of life and is practised as ruthlessly as ever. Even where in that profit-oriented society the productive forces have attained a high level, crises keep recurring and the armies of unemployed, far from disappearing, keep growing. Even if the occasional ray of sunshine lights up the economic horizon, the life of the worker remains overshadowed by uncertainty. Thirty years of the GDR provide added proof that socialism alone is capable of turning the fruits of human creativity and the accomplishments of science and technology into genuine blessings for the people.

The pioneers of post-war reconstruction were firmly convinced that things would be better without capitalists. Life has proved them right in a thousand ways. Led by the working class and the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, we are successfully pursuing the path on which we embarked when transforming the country on antifascist and democratic lines and on which we have now made considerable progress in shaping an advanced socialist society.

The working class has steadily increased its influence in all spheres of life, simultaneously strengthening its alliance with the farmers, the intelligentsia and the other sections of the working population. If at all stages of our 30-year construction effort, in which we went through all sorts of trials and tribulations, it has been possible to preserve this alliance and to reinforce and enrich it all the time, this underlines the fact that the policies of our Party are based on a profound scientific analysis. Eloquent proof of this is provided by the National Front of the GDR, in which the comradely co-operation of the working-class Party with the Democratic Farmers' Party

of Germany, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, the National Democratic Party of Germany and the mass organisations has proved its worth in the most convincing manner.

It is not only in the material basis of the life of society as a whole that a profound change has come about under the leadership of the working class during these three decades. There has also been a basic change in the intellectual make-up of our people. The most important achievement of the socialist revolution is a new type of man. If today socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, the spirit of friendship among peoples and anti-imperialist solidarity have found such wide acceptance and taken such deep roots in our country, then this can be looked upon as one of our most valuable achievements. The moral and political unity of the people is one of the indispensable preconditions for the stability of our Republic and its future. 30 years of the German Democratic Republic are at the same time three decades of our friendship with the Soviet Union and this has continued to grow in strength. The country of Lenin from the very beginning afforded us protection and assistance. We were able to make use of the vast experience of the victorious socialist revolution and of socialist construction which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the USSR had gathered since the days of Red October. Soviet communists in uniform helped their class brothers by word and deed. Innumerable people in our country count these ties of friendship among their most rewarding and unforgettable experiences.

The more the socialist revolution in the German Democratic Republic developed, the more logical even closer cooperation with the Soviet Union became. These common interests have made their contribution to all our successes. In 1949 trade between our countries amounted to slightly over 1,000 million marks, which figure had risen to over 35,000 million marks by 1978. If we mention this steep ascent in trade figures, then our thoughts inevitably turn to the close relations between combines, enterprises, universities, research institutes and schools in both countries. No one any longer considers it extraordinary that workers from both countries jointly smelt steel, that young people from the GDR study in the country of Lenin, that our pupils receive letters in German from there and that these are answered in Russian. That is how it should be, this is socialist partnership. As this continues as part of the socialist way of life so our peoples are coming closer together. This development has been consistently advocated by the Com-

unist Party of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and is being actively promoted.

On the occasion of this great anniversary of our socialist German state the Programme on Specialisation and Cooperation in Production for the Period up to 1990 was signed yesterday. This is an event of great moment for us. All our future plans are closely tied to our friendship with the Soviet Union. The new Programme, which provides for the further fruitful development of our fraternal relations, is entirely in line with the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed on 7 October 1975. Great tasks await us. Let us but turn our thoughts to the needs and opportunities of the scientific and technological revolution and to the not very simple demands made on the development of the energy resources of our countries. Far-reaching projects of this nature can only be carried out jointly with the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries and we shall master them jointly.

In this manner we shall together be undertaking projects in science, technology and production whose extent and intricacies will by far exceed what has been done in the past. In so doing we shall again prove that these tasks are being solved on a level which cannot be achieved under capitalism: for the good of our peoples and in the interests of our common socialist cause.

Unification of forces often results in their multiplication. This has also been proved by the socialist economic integration of the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The German Democratic Republic will continue to participate actively in this joint effort of the fraternal countries. We look upon this as a decisive trump card in the further development of advanced socialist society in our own country and in the economic competition with imperialism.

In the course of this process unity and cooperation among our peoples are being deepened as a result of a multitude of contacts. Whatever aspect we look at—be it the millionfold visits exchanged by citizens of the German Democratic Republic, People's Poland, Czechoslovakia and the other socialist countries, or the close fraternal ties of friendship with Cuba and with heroic Vietnam—it all shows ever more clearly the internationalism that exists in the socialist world.

Every single year in the history of our German Democratic Republic has also been a year of consistent struggle for the grand aim of safeguarding peace and actively helping to prevent a war from ever again emanating from German soil. This is a decisive lesson from the past which our state has

always applied in its policies in line with its socialist character. As a result of the elimination of the imperialist power structure and its reactionary aggressive spirit the sources of war have for ever dried up in our country. We have, together with our Warsaw Treaty allies, undertaken not a few efforts to see to it that Europe is turned from a continent of tension and war into an area of lasting peace, good-neighbourliness and cooperation. Their results have contributed to the process which has led to political détente and which has brought about significant progress in implementing the principles of peaceful coexistence between countries with differing social systems.

We have always been aware of the fact and continue to be aware that peace—this issue of vital importance to humanity—must be fought for obstinately and tenaciously. This is so because imperialism, in view of its nature, will remain aggressive and its actions in many ways unpredictable. Each day proves anew the truth of Lenin's dictum that only a revolution which knows how to defend itself is worth anything. The National People's Army and the other armed defence and security forces of the GDR have always carried out their duties honourably over the last 30 years. They constantly maintain a high level of combat readiness in defence of peace together with the glorious armed forces of the Soviet Union and the other armies of the socialist military alliance of the Warsaw Treaty. This is in keeping with the interests of our people and of the entire socialist community.

This is all the more true because the most aggressive imperialist circles are pushing for increased armaments on the part of NATO to a hitherto unheard-of level and are leaving no doubt in regard to their intentions vis-à-vis socialism and the national and social liberation of the peoples. They do not even rule out the possibility of plunging Europe—and not only Europe—into a nuclear Armageddon. In this way they are exposing themselves in the most repulsive light as enemies of humanity.

In keeping with the foreign policy objectives formulated at the 9th Party Congress, the German Democratic Republic, in conjunction with its sister nations, is doing all in its power to ensure the best possible international conditions for socialist and communist construction in our countries. The first priority is to act still more forcefully so as to cement détente and bring about genuine moves towards disarmament and, on this basis, to avert any risk of a world war. The arms race must be terminated, this being indispensable for further progress in safeguarding peace. What is at stake is the very existence of humanity.

This is why, among other things, we take careful note of all steps taken by the Federal Republic of Germany which serve the further normalisation of relations between the two German states as well as arms limitation and disarmament. Many issues facing us now and in future hinge on this further normalisation. Chancellor Schmidt recently pointed out that ■ readiness to display realism is needed if, in his words, our desire for peace is to prevail. Since the German Democratic Republic shows this readiness we consider it a distinct possibility to resolve a number of questions opening the way to further progress in the direction of safeguarding peace and disarmament. What both the citizens of the GDR and the citizens of the Federal Republic need is not the deployment of medium-range missiles in the West European NATO countries, but cooperation between the two German states on matters of disarmament in the spirit of the policy of peaceful coexistence.

I would like to make a special point of once again paying tribute to the indefatigable, constructive efforts being made in Lenin's spirit by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the USSR to uphold the cause of world peace. Our people have the highest regard for the outstanding personal contribution our friend and comrade, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, has made to this work of peace which is so crucial to all mankind. Through the results of your Vienna meeting with US President Carter, dear Comrade Brezhnev, you have rendered an invaluable service to the cause of peace. In signing the SALT II Treaty you have affixed your name to an agreement designed to put an effective curb on the arms race as far as the most awesome types of weapons ■■ concerned. This is an important step towards the solution of the disarmament problem.

If any further proof were needed SALT II strikingly confirms that imperialism's hoary and carefully fostered myth about the threat from the East is devoid of any foundation even though NATO continues to peddle it to justify its arms build-up and to try to hoodwink public opinion at home. The truth is that ever since the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 there has come from the East, from the Soviet Union, the call on all to safeguard peace. The Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community are constantly engaged in a wide range of activities to maintain the momentum of détente, to pave the way for disarmament and to banish war from the life of the human race. As is borne out by the response they elicit internationally they have an enormous impact in that they promote peaceful coexistence and provide ■ rallying point for all those committed to peace. Consequently, we are fully behind the recent proposals which the

Foreign Minister of the USSR, our friend and comrade Andrei Gromyko, has submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on behalf of the Soviet Government.

Peace is vital to all the world's nations. It is the first essential if they are to lead a happy life, transform the conditions of their existence and achieve national and social liberation. It is with this in mind that the German Democratic Republic has always perceived and carried out the special responsibilities resulting from its position at the boundary line between the two social systems, socialism and imperialism, between the Warsaw Treaty and NATO alliances. And we will continue to act with this in mind. It is in the nature of our socialist foreign policy that we invariably combine our commitment to peace with active solidarity extended to all those fighting on the anti-imperialist front, whether this be in Africa, Asia or Latin America. We feel at one with all our friends throughout the world who in these days are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of the GDR. Fellow-feeling and solidarity are now deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the citizens of our Republic. We look upon this as one of the most impressive proofs of the revolutionary changes that have been wrought in thirty years.

We are now on the threshold of the fourth decade of the German Democratic Republic's existence. It is with justified self-confidence and optimism that we are confronting the challenges lying ahead. The decisions adopted by the 9th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the programme of our Party clearly point the way. We will continue the work of fashioning an advanced socialist society in this country, thereby paving the way for the gradual transition to communism. We will press on with our synthesis of economic and social policies in the certainty that we shall be able to count on massive support from millions of working people up and down the country.

The extent of the advances we will be making in all spheres of life will chiefly depend on our success in effectively fulfilling the economic objectives we have set ourselves. In preparation for the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic the working people of this country have come up with many new initiatives taking into account the demands of the future. Considering the drastic and abiding changes that have occurred on the world market these are by no means inconsiderable.

All the more important are the new pledges to increase labour productivity beyond the degree usual until now, to use energy, raw materials and other materials still more carefully and sensibly and to make far more thorough

use of all untapped reserves. We need this in all spheres. Problems arousing pessimism in the capitalist world are being faced here with full confidence in the inexhaustible strength of socialist society, with optimism and in an indomitable spirit.

In view of the fact that today's problems are being tackled with an eye to the future, we are concentrating our strength more than ever on developing our material and technological foundations. We need to make use of all the advantages socialism has to offer in order to link science and production still more effectively and to advance intensification and rationalisation with unrelenting consistency and on a broad front. In this manner we shall increase the efficiency required to safeguard what we have achieved in respect of the material and cultural standard of living of the people and its further gradual development. This continues to lie at the heart of the policy of our Party and Government and all forces united in the National Front of the GDR.

Great things have been created during the last 30 years in the German Democratic Republic and we have great plans for the future. Based on the unshakable trust that links Party, state and people, and on the creativity, industry and initiative of all working people we shall implement the decisions adopted by the 9th Congress of the SED. These are projects whose realisation will benefit both society as a whole and the individual. We are consistently continuing along our proven and successful path in close alliance with the Soviet Union and the other fraternal countries and in solidarity with all progressive forces throughout the world. Treading this path for the welfare of man and the happiness of the people is worth every exertion. This serves the cause of peace and socialism.

Long live the 30th anniversary of our socialist German Democratic Republic!

Tables*

Table 1
Index of gross industrial production by industry

Industry	1949	1950	1960	1970	1975	1979
Total	79	100	294	535	727	884
Energy and fuels	94	100	169	247	282	342
Chemicals	83	100	290	613	910	1,113
Metal manufacture	75	100	354	587	815	947
Construction materials	83	100	308	571	799	902
Machinery and vehicles	74	100	365	734	972	1,219
Electrical engineering, electronics and instruments	77	100	460	1,144	1,776	2,475
Light industry (not incl. textiles)	80	100	225	372	496	592
Textiles	73	100	246	344	444	519
Foodstuffs	78	100	299	439	574	642

Table 2
Development of national income and net product by branch of the economy**

Year	National income		Net product of branch					
			Manufacturing (not incl. artisans engaged in construction)	Construction	Agriculture and forestry	Transport, posts and telecommunications	Domestic trade	Other productive sectors
	1,000 million marks		1950 = 100					
1949	22.4	82.1	79.7	92.0	82.4	91.8	80.7	92.6
1950	27.3	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1960	71.5	262.0	278.6	271.4	134.4	184.0	298.1	278.9
1970	109.5	400.8	467.6	492.2	148.6	264.2	449.2	463.3
1975	142.4	521.3	619.4	619.1	164.4	342.1	594.8	616.4
1979	166.6	610.2	748.4	692.0	165.6	389.6	686.3	797.1

** at 1975 prices

* The tables are from the 1980 Statistical Yearbook of the GDR

Table 3

Investment in selected branches of the economy in million marks

Year	Investment (not incl. joint ventures) total*	Manu- facturing*	Construc- tion*	Agri- culture and for- estry*	Transport, posts and telecommu- nications*	Domes- tic trade*
1949	2,870	1,300	20	322	375	40
1950	3,612	1,650	27	421	498	55
1960	16,256	8,003	423	1,929	1,723	475
1970	33,536	17,254	1,068	4,355	2,939	1,569
1975	42,048	20,983	1,406	4,979	4,426	1,557
1979**	49,800	26,250	1,450	5,000	4,200	1,850

* At 1975 prices

** Provisional

Table 4

Average fixed assets in the productive sectors of the economy
in million marks*

Year	Total	Manu- facturing	Construc- tion	Agriculture and forestry	Transport, posts and telecommuni- cations	Domes- tic trade
1955	136,926	77,999	1,957	16,933	31,082	7,321
1960	161,932	94,699	2,808	20,486	33,078	8,730
1970	275,985	167,626	7,448	37,500	45,532	14,129
1975	366,704	229,293	10,563	47,863	55,993	18,602
1979**	456,302	288,880	14,339	57,970	66,455	23,426

* At 1966 prices

** Provisional

Table 5
Electricity output in 20 selected countries, 1978

Country	1,000 million kWh	Country	1,000 million kWh
World	7,334		
USA**	2,211*	Brazil**	100*
USSR	1,202	Spain	99
Japan	533*	GDR	96
FRG	345	Sweden	90
Canada**	336	Australia	89 ¹
UK	288	China (not incl. Taiwan)	87 ²
France	223	Norway	81
Italy	175	Czechoslovakia	69
Poland	116	Romania	64
India	101	Yugoslavia	51

* 1977 figures

** Not incl. power station consumption

¹ Financial year ending on 30 June of the stated year

² 1970 figures

Table 6

Electricity output per capita in 20 selected countries, 1978

Country	kWh	Country	kWh
World	1,722	GDR	5,727
Norway	19,982	Kuwait***	5,330**
Canada*	14,286	UK	5,155
Iceland***	11,893	Belgium	5,167
Sweden	10,874	Austria	5,073
USA*	10,198**	Japan	4,678**
Finland*	7,197	USSR	4,600
New Zealand***	6,871	Czechoslovakia	4,564
Switzerland*	6,642	Netherlands	4,412
Australia	6,213 ¹	Denmark	4,020
FRG	5,814		

* Not incl. power station consumption

** 1977 figures

*** In public utilities

¹ Financial year ending on 30 June of the stated year

Table 7

Yields per hectare of selected crops

Year	Grain tonnes per hectare	Oil-bearing crops*	Potatoes	Sugar beet
1949	1.81	—	11.22	17.64
1950	1.97	0.95	16.89	25.92
1960	2.75	1.44	19.24	28.78
1970	2.82	1.79	19.57	32.01
1979	3.56	1.73	22.29	26.34

* Not incl. seeds of fibre plants

Table 8
Livestock population in the GDR, '000 head

Year	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Laying hens
1949	3,316.9	1,430.1	4,322.1	6,788.0
1950	3,614.7	1,616.4	5,704.8	8,725.1
1960	4,675.3	2,175.1	8,316.1	28,120.8
1970	5,190.2	2,162.9	9,683.6	25,469.6
1979	5,596.3	2,124.5	12,131.7	26,500.2

Table 9
Sales of important farm products to the state

(a) Sales per hectare of farmland			
Year	Fat stock, total in kg	Milk (3.5 per cent fat content) in kg	Eggs
1949	38.0	219.8	32
1950	57.6	266.4	48
1960	169.7	759.6	339
1970	262.6	1,032.8	558
1979	362.0	1,240.3	710

(b) Total sales			
Year	Fat stock, total in '000 tonnes	Milk (3.5 per cent fat content) in '000 tonnes	Eggs millions
1949	242.5	1,404.3	206.0
1950	375.9	1,739.4	314.3
1960	1,089.5	4,878.3	2,176.3
1970	1,651.0	6,492.3	3,504.8
1979	2,273.6	7,789.5	4,455.9

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Table 10

Foreign trade turnover of the GDR by group of countries
in million marks (in real terms)

Year	Total	Socialist countries* incl. USSR	USSR	Developing countries	Capitalist industrial nations
1949	2,702.0	1,755.6	1,018.9	8.4	938.0
1950	3,677.8	2,659.9	1,460.7	13.6	1,004.4
1960	18,487.4	13,798.8	7,907.4	791.3	3,897.2
1970	39,597.4	28,340.1	15,484.5	1,601.4	9,656.0
1979	108,844.6	74,891.1	39,271.1	5,670.1	28,283.4

* from 1962 incl. Cuba and from 1978 incl. Laos

Table 11

Turnover of GDR trade with CMEA countries in million marks
(in real terms)

Year	USSR	CMEA countries Total
1949	1,018.9	1,754.9
1950	1,460.7	2,659.9
1960	7,907.4	12,497.1
1970	15,484.5	26,658.8
1975	26,539.4	49,267.5
1979	39,271.1	71,595.2

Table 12

Specialized products as a proportion of GDR exports to other CMEA countries

Year	USSR in per cent	CMEA countries total in per cent
1970	1	1
1975	32	19
1979	41	31

Table 13
Fulfilment of the housing programme

Year	Dwellings completed		Modernization	Housing space created, in '000 sq.m.
	Total	New construction		
1949	29,825	●	●	1,730
1950	30,992	●	●	1,800
1960	80,489	71,857	8,632	4,447
1970	76,088	65,786	10,302	4,256
1979	162,743	117,355	45,388	7,138

Table 14
Public spending in million marks

Year	Total	Subsidies for essential commodities, services and public transport	Housing construction and management	Educational	Cultural activities, sport and recreation	Social security	Health and social services
1971	26,253	8,527	2,127	5,836	1,054	6,191	2,518
1975	37,119	11,226	3,743	7,669	1,898	9,541	3,042
1979*	49,188	15,727	6,708	9,003	2,255	12,472	3,023

* Provisional

Table 15
Income and savings deposits of the GDR population

Year	Earned income*	Net monetary income	Real per capita income of blue and white-collar households	Savings deposits
	marks	1960 = 100	1960 = 100	million marks
1949	290	42.6	■	■
1950	311	44.9	●	1,275
1960	555	100	100	17,498
1970	755	137.9	138.9	52,149
1979	1,006	204.8	215.1	96,958

* Average earned monthly income of blue and white-collar workers in full-time employment in the socialist economy (not incl. other productive and non-productive sectors)

Table 16
Retail trade turnover in million marks

Year	Total	Food, drink and tobacco	Consumer durables
1949	13,818	8,659	5,158
1950	17,260	10,550	6,710
1960	44,957	24,921	20,036
1970	64,059	35,776	28,283
1975	81,905	42,493	39,411
1979	95,710	48,634	47,076

Table 17
Per capita consumption of selected foodstuffs

		1955	1960	1970	1975	1979*
Meat and meat products	kg	45.0	55.0	66.1	77.8	88.6
Eggs and egg products		116	197	239	269	284
Edible fat	kg	28.5	33.1	33.6	32.5	32.9
Butter	kg	9.5	13.5	14.6	14.7	15.3
Milk, 2.5 per cent fat content	litre	90.7	94.5	98.5	100.8	98.7
Cheese	kg	3.0	3.6	4.6	5.5	7.2
Vegetables	kg	■	60.7	84.8	90.0	96.8
Sugar and sugar products	kg	27.4	29.3	34.4	36.8	39.7
Non-alcoholic beverages	litre	■	30.9**	40.8	70.3	82.2

* Provisional

** 1965

Table 18
Number of selected consumer durables per 100 households
in the GDR

Item	Number per 100 households			
	1955	1960	1970	1979
Television set	1.2	18.5	73.6	103.5
Washing machine	0.5	6.2	53.6	79.9
Refrigerator/freezer	0.4	6.1	56.4	102.2
Car	0.2	3.2	15.6	36.3

Table 19
Children below school age cared for in day nurseries
and kindergartens (per 1,000 children)

	1949	1950	1960	1970	1979
Day nurseries	8	13	143	291	603
Kindergartens	173	205	461	645	923

504 *From My Life*

Table 20

Medical care (number of inhabitants per doctor)

1949	1960	1970	1979
1,429	1,181	626	506

Table 21

Suggestion schemes in the nationally-owned economy

Year	Total number of persons involved	Number of production workers involved	Annual benefit of suggestions realized in million marks
1965	566,000	■	1,242.1
1970	661,000	●	2,456.4
1975	1,473,000	924	3,533.5
1979*	1,710,000	1,087	4,465.5

■ Provisional

Table 22

Socialist labour teams

Year	Production teams competing for title of "Socialist Labour Team"		Working and research groups	
	Number	Members	Number	Members
1965	84,147	1,370,440	28,893	188,480
1970	131,880	2,537,746	33,636	245,048
1975	228,129	4,038,669	43,836	358,491
1979	252,369	4,596,950	39,317	339,792

Table 23

Qualification level of the work force in the socialist economy

Year	Employees with full vocational and other qualifications in thousands				
	Total	University graduates	Technical training college graduates	Supervisors	Skilled workers
1971	3,982.3	278.9	482.8	224.1	2,996.6
1975	5,105.2	398.9	620.3	254.0	3,832.1
1979	5,866.0	484.6	882.2	273.5	4,225.6

Table 24

Student population at universities and technical training colleges

Year	At universities		At technical training colleges	
	Total in '000	per 10,000 population	Total in '000	per 10,000 population
1949	28.5	15.1	16.0	8.5
1950	30.0	16.3	21.0	11.9
1960	99.9	58.1	126.0	73.1
1970	143.2	83.9	167.2	97.9
1979*	129.1	77.1	169.6	101.3

* Provisional

Index of names

- Abusch, Alexander 85
Ackermann, Anton 40, 129, 184
Adam, Theo 353
Adenauer, Konrad 166, 198, 213
Altenkirch, Ernst 104
Andersen Nexö, Martin 352
Angenfort, Josef (Jupp) 188
Arafat, Yasser 452
Aragon, Louis 176
Axen, Hermann 130, 144, 153, 251, 447
- Baade, Fritz 266
Bach, Johann Sebastian 356
Balzac, Honoré de 241
Barbusse, Henri 69
Barthel, Kurt (Kuba) 176, 352
Bäsel, Else 443
Bäsel, Fritz 443
Baum, Bruno 91, 95, 96, 98, 99
Baum, Herbert 97
Baumann, Edith 122, 127, 143, 154
Bebel, August 4, 156, 215, 482
Becher, Johannes R. 46, 124, 176, 241, 351
Beethoven, Ludwig van 356
Behnke, Bernhard 104
Behrendt, Wolfgang 231
Beidin, Ivan 133
Belshazzar 64
Berg, Helene 85
Berlinguer, Enrico 188, 381
Bialas, Ignatz 104
Biermann, Wolfgang 280
Bies, Luitwin 21, 56, 57, 82, 84, 88
Bies, Reinhold 88
Birkemeyer, Gisela 231
Bitterhof, Werner 317
Bobrowski, Johannes 353
Boisson, Guy de 187
Bölling, Klaus 435
Bormann, Martin 110
Brass, Otto 124
Bratteli, Trygve Martin 393
Braun, Ernst 68
Braun, Max 88
Brecht, Bertolt 31, 176, 241, 350, 351, 353
Bredel, Willi 176, 352
Breitscheid, Rudolf 482
Brezhnev, Leonid Ilyich 269, 271, 302, 303, 372–375, 377, 380, 393, 398, 428, 452, 454, 473, 480, 491
Buchholz, Peter 124
Buchwitz, Otto 143, 148
Budyonny, Semyon Mikhailovich 39, 43
Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich 39, 40, 43
Busch, Ernst 102, 353, 463
Bykovski, Valeri 467
- Carter, James Earl 491
Casaroli, Agostino 393, 456
Castro Ruz, Fidel 379, 422, 437, 455
Ceaușescu, Nicolae 372, 379, 393
Chandra, Romesh 393
Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich 241
Chemnitzer, Johannes 451
Chernyshevski, Nikolai Gavrilovich 176
Chona, Mathias Mainza 419
Chuikov, Vasili Ivanovich 133, 171, 227, 384
Chwalek, Roman 124
Clermont, Friedrich 451
Columbus, Christopher 423
Correns, Erich 449
Corvalán, Luis 462
Coubertin, Pierre de 299
Cremer, Fritz 353
- Dahlem, Franz 85, 129, 143, 183
Dahn, Felix 100
Defoe, Daniel 176
Denis, Jacques 187, 188
Dessau, Paul 350, 353, 354
Dewey, Robert 104
Dickel, Friedrich 203
Dickens, Charles 176, 241
Dien, Raymonde 188
Döblin, Alfred 32

508 *From My Life*

- Dohlus, Horst 251
 Doma, Peter 87, 88
 Dostoyevski, Fyodor Mikhailovich 241
 Dünow, Hermann 104
- Ebert, Friedrich 172, 183, 187, 199, 250, 251, 360, 447
 Ehrenburg, Ilya Grigorievich 187
 Eikemeier, Fritz 211
 Einstein, Albert 31, 301, 356
 Eisler, Hanns 351
 Ende, Horst 211
 Engels, Friedrich 4, 5, 9, 16, 38, 59, 91, 156, 196, 215, 216, 276, 287, 296, 299, 312, 313, 321, 335, 342, 355, 376, 413, 414, 479, 482
 Erika (author's daughter) 244, 448
- Fadeyev, Alexander Alexandrovich 356
 Fast, Howard Melvin 176
 Fechner, Max 124, 143, 482
 Feist, Margot (see Honecker, Margot)
 Felfe, Werner 251
 Flieg, Leopold (Leo) 16
 Florin, Wilhelm 70
 Fodorová, Sarah 95, 98
 Ford, Gerald Rudolph 388, 389, 393, 394, 456
 François-Poncet, Jean 394, 470
 Frank, Anne 85
 Frenzel, Max 104, 464
 Frohn, Werner 280
 Fučík, Julius 47
- Gäbler, Fritz 101
 Galsworthy, John 176
 Gandhi, Shrimati Indira Priyadarshini 415, 416, 461
 Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) 416
 Gaus, Günter 435
 Geissler, Herbert 154
 Gerlach, Manfred 449
 Geschke, Ottomar 124
 Gide, André 69
 Giersek, Edward 372, 379
 Giscard d'Estaing, Valéry 393
 Gladkov, Fyodor Vasilievich 356
 Glückauf, Erich 85
- Goebbels, Joseph 32, 84, 91, 110
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 100, 177, 240, 356
 Goldenbaum, Ernst 449
 Gomes, Francisco da Costa e 393
 Gomolla, Emanuel 104
 Göring, Bernhard 124
 Gorki, Maxim 39, 176, 241, 351
 Götting, Gerald 449
 Graber, Pierre 393
 Grändorf, Ferdinand 104
 Grechko, Andrei Antonovich 203, 384
 Gromyko, Andrei Andreyevich 492
 Grosse, Fritz 40, 60, 70, 73, 101, 102
 Grosskopf, Hermann 310, 311
 Grotewohl, Otto 134, 142, 143, 171, 175, 177, 178, 183, 186, 187, 199, 204, 249, 482
 Grüber, Heinrich 124
 Grünberg, Karl 352
 Grund 110
 Grüneberg, Gerhard 199, 251, 282, 451
 Gypfner, Richard 120
- Hager, Kurt 92, 96, 199, 251, 294
 Hager, Sabina 92
 Hanisch, Oswald 127
 Hanke, Erich 107-110
 Hartnacke, Wilhelm 242
 Heidenreich, Gerhard 190
 Heine, Heinrich 241, 356
 Hennecke, Adolf 175
 Hermlin, Stephan 187, 352
 Herrmann, Joachim 251, 282, 471
 Hesse, Hermann 352
 Heusinger, Adolf 190
 Himmler, Heinrich 103, 110
 Hindenburg, Paul von Beneckendorf und von 59, 65, 103
 Hitler, Adolf 8, 16, 34, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 63-69, 72, 73, 81-84, 87-90, 92, 101, 103, 110, 112, 117, 204
 Ho Chi Minh 423
 Hockauf, Frida 193
 Hoelz, Max 43, 74
 Hoffmann, Ernst 143
 Hoffmann, Fritz 104

- Hoffmann, Hans-Joachim 467
Hoffmann, Heinz 70, 129, 203, 211, 251, 450, 457
Hohlfeld, Franz 317
Homann, Heinrich 449
Honecker, Andreas ■
Honecker, Frieda X, 2, 8, 12, 137
Honecker, Gertrud 2, 8, 12, 28, 48, 93, 100, 137
Honecker, Karl-Robert 2, 8, 21, 137
Honecker, Karoline X, 1, 2, 7, 8, 27, 446
Honecker, Katharina (Käthe) X, 2, 8, 9, 28
Honecker, Margot 172, 186, 246, 360, 445, 463
Honecker, Wilhelm 1, 2, 7-9, 24, 26, 27, 33, 446
Honecker, Wilhelm (Willi) X, 2, 8, 33,
Hoppstädter, Hans 48, 100
Humboldt, Alexander von 301
Humboldt, Wilhelm von 301
Husák, Gustáv 372, 379, 393
Hüttel, Harry 101
Ismail, Abdel Fattah 421
Ivanovski, Yevgeni Filipovich 384, 471
Jähn, Sigmund 271, 303, 467
Jamin, Fritz 104
Jarowinsky, Werner 251
Jendretzky, Hans 124, 184
Jennes, Hans 86
Jørgensen, Anker 393
Kádár, János 198, 372, 379, 393
Kaganovich, Lasar Moiseyevich 39
Kaiser, Jacob 124
Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich 39, 342
Kamenev, Lév Borisovich 39
Kant, Hermann 353
Karg, Berta (Rola) 73
Katayev, Valentin Petrovich 177, 356
Kaunda, Kenneth David 418, 469
Keilson, Margarete (Grete) 121
Kekkonen, Urho Kaleva 393, 394, 456, 465
Keller, Edith 228
Kennel, Walter 88
Kerber, Erwin 104
Kessler, Heinz 122, 124, 127, 129, 134, 143, 145, 154, 155, 159, 161, 190, 203
Kiesler, Bruno 176
Kim Il Sung 424
Kipling, Joseph Rudyard 176
Kippenberger, Hans 86
Kisch, Egon Erwin 31, 32, 46
Klare, Hermann 294, 302
Kleiber, Günther 251, 282
Klemm, Josef 368
Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb 241
Knappe, Emilie 96
Knickerbocker, Hubert Renfro 50
Kodjo, Edem 421
Komóczin, Zoltán 381
Konev, Ivan Stepanovich 211, 384
Koplowitz, Jan 176, 352
Koshevoi, Pyotr Kirilovich 384
Kochemasov, Vyacheslav Ivanovich 159
Krack, Erhard 311
Kramer, Erwin 211
Kreisky, Bruno 388, 394
Krenz, Egon 251, 343
Krolikowski, Werner 251, 471
Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Gustav 5, 71
Küchenmeister, Wera 112
Kühn, Lotte 121
Kulikov, Viktor Georgievich 384, 453
Kurkotkin, Semyon Konstantinovich 384
Lamberz, Werner 251
Lange, Fritz 104
Lange, Ingeburg 251, 334
Lange, Robert 127
Langhoff, Wolfgang 176
Lautenbach, Edwin 96, 98,
Laval, Pierre 89, 90
Le Duan 379, 424, 465
Legal, Ernst 176
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 301
Lemmer, Ernst 124, 208,
Lemmnitz, Alfred 104
Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 9, 20, 22, 37-42, 47, 51, 53, 58, 91, 117, 195, 196, 205, 215, 216, 252, 267, 276, 287, 296, 299, 321, 342, 343, 355, 356, 365, 376, 378, 488, 490, 491
Leonhard, Wolfgang 120
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 240, 356

510 *From My Life*

- Leuschner, Bruno 100, 103, 129, 199, 250
Lichter, Lea 40
Liebknecht, Karl 4, 5, 9, 15, 17, 22, 32, 56, 59, 87, 156, 172, 186, 482
Liebknecht, Wilhelm 4, 156, 242, 482
London, Jack 176
López Portillo, José 440
Luxemburg, Rosa 4, 9, 22, 56, 59, 156, 172, 482

Machel, Samora Moises 419, 420, 469
Maddalena, Maximilian (Max) 85, 101, 102, 115
Maes, Silver 230
Mahle, Hans 120
Makarios III 393
Mann, Heinrich 32, 241
Mann, Thomas 241, 352
Mannbar, Artur 26, 104, 464
Marchwitza, Hans 46, 71, 86, 176
Marcos, Ferdinand Edralin 415, 465
Marcos, Imelda 415
Mark 77
Maron, Karl 211
Marti y Pérez, José 423
Marx, Karl 4, 9, 16, 38, 40, 59, 91, 156, 196, 215, 216, 242, 259, 267, 276, 287, 296, 299, 321, 335, 342, 355, 376, 413, 414, 479, 482
Matern, Hermann 183, 186, 199, 206, 250, 447
Maxwell, Robert IX, 426, 427
May, Gisela 351, 467
Mayakowski, Vladimir Vladimirovich 176, 356
Mehring, Franz 482
Melville, Herman 176
Melwig, Willi 87, 88
Mengistu Haile Mariam 412, 413, 420
Menzel, Fritz 104
Menzel, Robert 101, 103, 154
Mickin, Hans 104
Mickin, Walter 104
Mielke, Erich 120, 211, 251, 457
Miessner, Rudolf 127
Mikhailov, Nikolai Alexandrovich 154, 187
Mikisch, Hans 105
Mischnick, Wolfgang 148, 405, 453

Mittag, Günter 251, 274, 282, 467
Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich 39
Moro, Aldo 393
Mrochen, Thomas 105
Mückenberger, Erich 184, 199, 251
Mugabe, Robert Gabriel 419
Müller, Erich 280
Müller, Hermann 30
Müller, Kurt 70
Müller, Margarete 251, 451
Müller (master tiler) 28, 33
Müller (doctor) 101
Münzenberg, Wilhelm (Willi) 16, 29

Nagel, Otto 176
Naumann, Konrad 251
Neruda, Pablo 352, 446
Neto, Antonio Agostinho 417, 468
Neumann, Alfred 102, 199, 231, 251
Nickolay, Fritz 88
Nkomo, Joshua Mgabuko Nyongolo 419
Norden, Albert 86, 199, 220, 251, 449
Nujoma, Sam 419

Oelssner, Fred 41, 129, 183
Ostrovski, Nikolai Alexeyevich 46, 177, 241, 342

Palme, Olof 393
Papen, Franz von 65, 72
Paterna, Erich 105
Pavlov, Yakov Fyodorovich 156
Perl, Alfred 110, 115, 116, 118, 119
Pfordt, Fritz 88
Pieck, Wilhelm 128, 134-136, 138, 142, 143, 145, 148, 149, 160, 169-173, 178, 183, 187, 191, 199, 200, 204, 215, 218, 221, 237, 239, 242, 249, 314, 339, 343, 445, 482
Pius XI 55
Planck, Max 31
Preobrazhenski, Yevgeni Alexeyevich 40
Pushkin, Alexander Sergeyevich 176

Qadhafi, Muammar el 417, 468

Radek, Karl 40, 43
Radtke, Benno 311

- Rau, Heinrich 183, 199, 250
 Reagan, Ronald Wilson 427, 428
 Recknagel, Helmut 232
 Reddy, Neelam Sanjiva 416, 466
 Rehmer, Ernst 107
 Rehse, Hans-Joachim 96, 97
 Reimann, Max 86, 166, 187, 188
 Reinhold, Wolfgang 190, 457
 Renn, Ludwig (Arnold Vieth von
 Golssenau) 32, 353
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von 89
 Roberto (author's grandson) 463
 Röchling, Hermann 19, 20, 57, 83,
 84
 Rodenberg, Hans 352
 Röhm, Ernst 72
 Rolland, Romain 69
 Rom, Willi 68, 71, 74
 Röser, Peter 9
 Rossaint, Joseph 73, 74
 Rühle, Otto 17
 Rykov, Alexei Ivanovich 39
- Sakharov, Matvei Vasilievich 384
 Salomon, Bruno von 88,
 Sander, Walter 88
 Santos, José Eduardo dos 468
 Schäfer, Theo 218
 Schall, Ekkehard 351, 467
 Schall-Brecht, Barbara 351, 467
 Schehr, John 72, 85, 87
 Scheibe, Herbert 457
 Schiller, Friedrich 100, 240, 356
 Schirdewan, Karl 199
 Schlimme, Hermann 124
 Schmidt, Elli 184
 Schmidt, Helmut 388, 389, 393, 394,
 400, 405, 435, 456, 491
 Schmieder, Werner 433
 Scholz, Helga 368
 Schrecker, Hans 86
 Schreier, Peter 353
 Schröder, Kurt von 64, 65
 Schröder (criminal investigation
 officer) 77
 Schubert, Hermann 85
 Schuler, Emil ■■■
 Schumacher, Kurt 166
 Schur, Gustav Adolf 230, 231
 Schürer, Gerhard 251
- Schütz, Johann 9
 Schweitzer, Albert 352
 Seelenbinder, Werner 226
 Seghers, Anna 46, 176, 187, 241, 348,
 353
 Seibt, Kurt 104, 115, 250
 Seifert, Willi 211
 Sens, Max 105
 Seraphin (supervisor) 107, 108, 111
 Severing, Carl 34, 60
 Shakespeare, William 100, 176
 Sholokhov, Mikhail Alexandrovich 46,
 176, 241
 Siemens, Carl Friedrich von 65
 Simone, André 89
 Sinclair, Upton Beall 176
 Sindermann, Horst 251, 282, 360
 Sitte, Willi 353
 Sokolovski, Vasili Danilovich 148, 384
 Sonja (author's daughter) 244, 448, 463
 Spangenberg, Max 92
 Speidel, Hans 190
 Spelz, Nikolaus 88
 Stalin, Joseph Visarionovich 39, 43, 179,
 187
 Steber, Franz 73, 74
 Stein, Friedel 86
 Stendhal 241
 Stevenson, Robert Louis Balfour 176
 Stoph, Willi 199, 203, 206, 210, 220,
 251, 360, 449
 Strauss, Franz Josef 208
 Streich (farmer) 28, 31
 Streletz, Fritz 457
 Stubnick-Fischer, Christa 231
 Strumm-Halberg, Karl Ferdinand von 3-6,
 45, 57, 90
 Swift, Jonathan 176
 Switalla, Anton 86
- Tack, Erich 289
 Tambo, Oliver Reginald 419
 Tesch, Bruno 69
 Thälmann, Ernst 22, 25, 29, 32-34, 37,
 53, 58, 60, 61, 64-67, 69, 76, 82, 88,
 103, 128, 142, 156, 186, 215, 218,
 221, 250, 339, 342, 343, 355, 375, 482
 Thälmann, Rosa 186, 187
 Thiele, Wilhelm 105, 117, 118, 464
 Thorndike, Andrew 353

512 *From My Life*

- Thorndike, Annelie 353
 Thuemmler (prison warden) 105, 116
 Tindemans, Leo 393
 Tisch, Harry 251, 364
 Tito, Josip Broz 379, 389, 393, 441, 460
 Titze, Richard 97
 Tolstoi, Alexei Nikolayevich 176
 Tolstoi, Lev (Leo) Nikolayevich 176, 241,
 Trudeau, Pierre Elliot 393
 Tschesno-Hell, Michael 353
 Tsedenbal, Yumjaagiyn 372, 379
 Tulpanov, Sergei Ivanovich 133
 Twain, Mark 176

 Uecker, Maximilian (Max) 101, 102
 Ulbricht, Walter 120, 121, 122, 124, 125, 143, 175, 181, 183, 187, 199, 203, 204, 206, 210, 218, 221, 231, 249, 250, 343, 381, 447, 482

 Verner, Paul 86, 127, 138, 139, 144, 159, 199, 211, 212, 231, 251, 449
 Vockel, Heinrich 124
 Voltmer, Erich 26, 27
 Voroshilov, Kliment Yefremovich 39
 Vorovski, Vatslav Vatslavovich 40
 Vo Thi Lien 341

 Wabra, Ernst 73
 Walde, Werner 251
 Waldheim, Kurt 394, 454, 456
 Walter, Margarete (Grete) 97
 Wandel, Paul 131
 Wangenheim, Gustav von 176, 352
 Warnke, Herbert 199, 250
 Wehner, Herbert 81, 85, 405, 453
 Weichert, Albert 70, 71, 74-78, 97, 98
 Weidenhof, Georg 4

 Weidenhof, Karoline (see Honecker, Karoline)
 Weidenhof, Ludwig 28, 33, 313
 Weidenhof, Peter 313
 Weigel, Helene 351
 Weinand 77
 Weineck, August Friedrich (Fritz) 22
 Weinert, Erich 32, 86-88
 Wekwerth, Manfred 351
 Wenck, Walter 116
 Whitman, Walt 176
 Wiechert, Theo 122, 127, 131
 Wiesner, Otto 72
 Wilde, Oscar 176
 Wilhelm II 3, 5, 18, 50, 431, 432
 Winkler, Erich 105
 Winzer, Otto 46, 86, 99, 120, 124
 Wolf, Friedrich 31, 119, 176, 177, 241, 328, 355
 Wolf, Konrad 119, 353
 Wollenberg, Erich 41, 43
 Wollweber, Ernst 199

 Yakubovski, Ivan Ignatievich 384, 450

 Zaisser, Wilhelm 184
 Zetkin, Clara 4, 58, 335, 482
 Zhivkov, Todor 372, 379, 393
 Zhukov, Georgi Konstantinovich 123, 132, 137, 384
 Ziegler, Erich 105
 Zille, Heinrich 313
 Zinoviev, Grigori Yevzeyevich 39
 Zörgiebel, Karl Friedrich 34
 zur Mühlen, Hermynia 19
 zur Mühlen, Patrik von 82
 Zweig, Arnold 187, 352

Index of abbreviations

AIZ	Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung (newspaper)
ANC	African National Congress of South Africa
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
Comintern	Communist International
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSU	Christian Social Union
CYI	Communist Youth International
DBD	Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands Democratic Farmers' Party of Germany
DEFA	Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft German Film Corporation
DFD	Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands Women's Democratic Federation of Germany
DP	Deutsche Partei German Party
DTSB	Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund German Gymnastics and Sports Federation
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund Confederation of Free German Trade Unions
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend Free German Youth
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei Free Democratic Party
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique Mozambique Liberation Front
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FSJ	Freie Sozialistische Jugend Free Socialist Youth
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei Secret State Police
GST	Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik Society for Sport and Technology
IAH	Internationale Arbeiterhilfe International Workers' Aid
JSB	Jung-Spartakus-Bund Young Spartacus League

514 *From My Life*

KB	Kulturbund League of Culture
KJVD	Kommunistischer Jugendverband Deutschlands Young Communist League of Germany
Komsomol	Young Communist League of the Soviet Union
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands Communist Party of Germany
LDPD	Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands Liberal Democratic Party of Germany
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft Agricultural Production Cooperative
MAS	Maschinenausleihstation Machine-hiring station
MPLA	Movimento popular de Libertação de Angola Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPD	National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands National Democratic Party of Germany
NKFD	Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland "Free Germany" National Committee
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei National Socialist German Workers' Party
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee National People's Army
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
RFB	Roter Frontkämpferbund Red Fighting Front
SA	Sturmabteilung Storm troops
SAJ	Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend Socialist Workers' Youth
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland Soviet Military Administration in Germany
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands Social Democratic Party of Germany
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
UNIP	United National Independence Party

USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany
VdgB	Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe Association for Mutual Peasants' Aid
VEB	Volkseigener Betrieb Nationally owned enterprise
VEG	Volkseigenes Gut State farm
VVN	Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes Association of Victims of the Nazi Régime
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZK	Zentralkomitee Central Committee